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THE OUTER AND THE INNER WORLD

THE OUTER
AND
THE INNER WORLD

AND OTHER SERMONS

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NOTE.

THE Sermons contained in this little volume were published from month to month during 1893 in *The Essex Hall Pulpit* series. The sermons were preached by ministers known as Unitarians. It is not their aim, however, to present religion in a controversial aspect, or to emphasize, either by way of affirmation or negation, what is usually known as doctrine. They are chiefly designed for use at little gatherings of worshippers in out of the way parts of the country, where attendance at a church or chapel in harmony with their feelings is difficult, if not impossible.

The hymns also are by Unitarian writers; and it is hoped that they too may prove helpful to the religious life, and strengthen faith in God and love to man.

London, November, 1893.

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THE OUTER AND THE INNER WORLD.

BY REV. JAMES MARTINEAU, LL.D., D.D., D.C.L.

Stand in awe and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.—Psalm iv. 4.

Comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.—1 Cor. ii. 13 and 14.

A MAN in whom some one of the five senses is imperfect or disordered learns to treat it with a wise distrust, and guards himself against the deceptions which it would practise upon him. If he has a constant murmur in his ear, he does not therefore suppose himself close upon the sea: nor, if there be a dimness or tint upon his eye, does he believe all the colours of creation degraded or perverted. He treats his organs of perception as media of discernment, unavoidably affecting the impressions which they transmit; and he understands the necessity of taking their faulty constitution into the account. The scientific observer of nature, for whose purpose the most perfect senses are inadequate without the advantage of artificial instruments, is yet more familiar with this process, of allowing for the errors of mere appearance. The flaw upon his glass he does not take for a feature in the skies: the warping of his brazen circle he does not construe into the orbit of a star; nor does he rely on the

measures of his graduated scale till he has read them off from opposite limbs. Far from taking offence at the suggestion that perhaps they are not exactly as he sees them, he is eager to be protected from illusions most perilous to his knowledge, and has worked up into a separate art the methods of detecting his own errors of observation.

If, however, we could take, in such instances, but *one look*, or if, on repeating it, the phenomenon always re-appeared as at first, we should remain hopeless victims of mistake; and should for ever carry about with us a phantasm of sense as if it were the presence of a reality in nature. We owe our deliverance from such a fate to the appeal which we are always ready to make from one medium and one trial to another. When the film which covers the landscape to us does not appear before our neighbour's eye; when the celestial motion given by one telescope vanishes on removing to another; an instant light is thrown upon the source of the diversity: we rely on the faithfulness of nature, and refer the unsteadiness to ourselves and our works. It is by change in the apparition that we discover the reality.

As we look on physical objects with the senses, so do we deal with moral and religious truth through faculties having a deeper seat. Call them by what name you will, Conscience, Reason, Soul, it is no less certain respecting them than respecting the eye and ear, that their constitution, their happy balance, their clear and right condition, must directly affect what we appear to see; and that if their glance be awry, if their focus be wrong, if their movement be eccentric, they will bring the spiritual universe before us in false lights, and mislead us as to all its laws. Unhappily, it is much more difficult to convince men of their moral disqualification for *thinking right*

on divine things, than of the organic blemishes which prevent their *seeing right* the visible universe around. Inherent in their very disease is a fatal pride which denies it and repels the cure; and like the drunkard who avers his sobriety with a reel, or the maniac who is for putting a strait-waistcoat on his physician, they manifest the depth of their darkness by believing in it as light. Nor are we to suppose this species of illusion only occasional, the special brand of divine displeasure upon profoundly guilty and reprobate minds. On the contrary, it is found in one of its stiffest forms among men otherwise of strong sense and high worth,—men fitted to be discoverers in nature, and to be trusted in affairs,—men capable of ruling the world, but not of seeing beyond it. The faculties which alone find exercise in such a one are not the media of religious truth; while the self-reliance which characterises him makes him despise and reject whatever does not lie within his personal circle of vision. The current language of piety in every age offends him as a disagreeable cant: the communion of the soul with God, the dark wrestling with temptation as a fiend, the deep shadow of guilt upon the heart, the unutterable peace attained through self-renunciation, have no meaning for him, and are put impatiently aside as women's wailings or poets' dreams. It is all very right, he thinks, that people should go to Church, and should say their prayers; otherwise they will perhaps forget many things which it is useful to remember; but as for God himself being any real party in the matter, that is all a fond fancy. And if a man has told a lie or stolen anything, he certainly ought to be sorry for it, so as not to do it again; but when respectable people who don't do such things talk of a constant sense of sin, he cannot think it anything but hypocrisy. He feels a kind of disrelish, or even spite, towards the

whole phraseology by which the religious affections strive to express themselves; and, could he deal with the English dictionary at his will, would score out all such words as soul and spirit; being content with the terms virtue and vice, he would dispense with holiness and sin; and since good men may be called worthies and heroes, he would see no occasion for saints. Religion altogether he regards as useful chiefly for the promotion of good conduct, and good conduct for the security of person and property and the soundness of trade,—which is much the same as saying that the rain was intended to fill the canals, and the granite mountains created for the commissioners of paving. This whole style of sentiment is the result of a partial action of the mind: it is an incapacity setting itself up as superior discernment. It is sometimes called the *Pride of Reason*. I cannot give it so dignified a name. That is not *Reason* which sees least below the surface of things, and understands only what it can handle, count, and measure; which rises by the smallest interval above the skill and vaticination of the intelligent brute; which throws itself wholly into the external without any cognizance of itself: but that rather which looks on the universe as on a symbolic picture, whose forms and colours are but the expression of a deep significance; which interprets the visible by the invisible; which is not stopped by the mask and veil of nature from penetrating to the real presence of divine thought, beauty, and love; and pushes aside the material uses that are but servitors at the gate of its home, to burst into the holy halls, and fling itself into the arms of its infinite Father. The ‘pride’ which denies whatever is beyond the circle of its own dark lantern is preeminently a pride of *Unreason*.

There are in truth two worlds in which it is given us to live,—an outer and an inner,—the earth and its affairs, the soul and its history. Without a free and balanced com-

munication with both, we can have no pure knowledge from either: our very thought will act as a vitiating medium, and our truth itself become an organized lie. We are made to *reflect*, no less than to *observe*; to know ourselves as well as our world; to estimate our affections as well as feel them; to think of our thought, wonder at our wonder, and believe in our beliefs. An age that has lost the power of meditation,—that cannot use its intellect without a business to plan, or a sum to calculate, or a book to read,—whose mind has no spontaneous creative life, but is a mere digestive apparatus for reducing crude facts into a nutritive state, cannot have a faith, and is fast losing even sight. Even outward nature entangles us then in a narrow cloud,—not the ambrosial cloud in which old Homer's heroes became clear-sighted though invisible,—but, inversely, a medium in which we remain in all our solid dimensions and see nothing beyond the street. How few men in our days really see the stars,—embrace the midnight immensity,—drink in the thirst-appeasing dawn, and lay to heart the greenness of the grass. One of our greatest astronomers has confessed that, though his life had been spent in gazing at the heavenly bodies or in computing the elements of their orbits, he never formed to himself a picture of the starry universe and spread abroad its spaces in his mind, till he wrote a popular book upon its phenomena. In an age less surrendered to outward things, outward things would more largely come into view; and the devout and musing mind, that proceeds from the spirit's centre to the world's circumference actually perceives more than he who strains his vision to fetch in the subtlest phenomena in the field. Where the inner soul is drowsy, the lids of observation droop at length, or the glazed eye sees only the watery rings and swimming motes of its own weariness and dreams. But especially would I insist upon the position, that all religious insight, and ultimately all

moral sentiment, depend upon self-knowledge and the internal activity of the soul; and that where the direction of the mind becomes exclusively outward, upon the *objects* by which we are surrounded, truth of the highest nature is as absolutely undiscernible as the heavens to him who looks through the telescope's wrong end.

Take, for example, the mental habit of *observing the characters* of other men, instead of *reflecting upon our own*. The majority of us are content to have our notions of right and wrong imposed upon us from without, and cannot pretend to discern a law within ourselves. Perhaps we have never even thought of looking there at all. Our standard is not fresh-given by the immediate voice of God in the silence of our conscience; but is a copy from the dictation of custom and the chatter of current criticism. The formulas of public approbation, the conventional tones of praise, the examples of history, and the mechanical influence of companions, are permitted to gather without resistance upon us; and the aggregate result is what we think and feel upon subjects of morals. Out of our own nature, by reading its history in temptation, by sinking deep into its contritions, going faithfully through with its bitter penances, and never hasting away from its aspirations, scarce any portion of our rules is produced: every element is subscribed and superinduced by accidents of position, instead of evolved by truth of nature. A standard so constructed is like a rule of law formed upon an aggregate of cases; and its applied use is a mere affair of interpretation, performed by the cold understanding, and needing only logic enough to perceive where the particular falls under the general. And thus the sentence of right or wrong, the solemn judicial award, in which the soul is but the forecourt of God's tribunal, is passed, like a

dry decree in Chancery, without the least intervention of a living conscience, without a spark of admiration or abhorrence: the thing is done just as it might be if life were made up of traditions and utilities, and there were no possibility of goodness and no reality in God. It is plain what must become of a man who thus borrows from the public a moral system to live by. The copy cannot transcend the original. He must be a simple reflection of his place and time, scrupling at nothing which will pass with them; venturing on nothing beyond their enterprise. With eye fixed wholly upon externals, he judges everything by its consequences, nothing by its principle; and has no notion that any passion or outgrowth of human nature can be amiss, unless it does visible harm; or any admirable, unless it does some palpable good; his idea of good and evil being limited all the while to the sentient sphere of economy and life. Accordingly, he has no power to withstand the splendour of some new iniquity, developing itself into grand proportions amid fashionable applause. Its motive and intrinsic nature may be low: it may be a mere example of greediness grown prodigious,—bursting all bounds and swelling to a kind of wild and romantic appetite for gain; still, if it breaks no recognised rule, and *contrives to succeed*, he will be helplessly swept away by the stream of vulgar admiration, and take his share in the profit and the acclaim. Yet all the while there may perhaps have played around his heart, as though it were falling into cold water, a certain dull and awful feeling, betokening a truth, could he but interpret it; namely, that only in maniacs and devils can any passion of the soul set up for itself, like an autocrat, with an alleged right to grow monstrous; that mere size, excessive quantity, inordinate inflation, is in itself a sure mark of evil and one of the diabolic signs; and that nothing is divine, or within

the will of God, which has not the modesty of measure and the beauty of proportion. Not only is it impossible for such a man ever himself to rise above the vulgar standard of respectability, but he cannot honour those who do. Anything that deviates from the proprieties is offensive to him: if it falls short of them, it must not taint the perfume of his correctness, but be thrust away with an 'I am holier than thou': if it transcends them, he takes the reproachful presence of a higher sanctity as a personal affront, and fiercely says, 'thou shalt not be holier than we.' And so his heart can canonize no living goodness, and be open to no prophet's voice. He waits till the saints are in the calendar and the revelations of God have become historical. He dislikes new questions of morals, where custom will not serve him and he is set afloat without clue or compass; and the purifying enthusiasm which starts them and makes him feel his incapacity he hates as an eccentricity and resents as an inconvenience. He has raised his fences, trimmed his ground, and smoothed his garden walks, and here alone he is at home; and he scarce believes in any wider world beyond, where the voice of the Lord God is heard among the forest trees, and by-ways of holiness strike up among lonely Alps. When heaven fills with glory the soul of some young prophet, and touches his lips with fire, and when at his deep and burning words tears stream down the peasant's cheeks, and children see divine light gleam through him, our fashionable Pharisees look superciliously on, sharpening the lines of their hard and scornful face: they cannot believe in any nearer connection with God than all the way back through Abraham: nor indeed are they anxious for a closer relationship; provided only it be legitimate, the more distant the better: caring only for the inheritance, nothing for the communion and the love. And so they withhold

their sanction and countenance from the Son of God; none of the chief people are to believe on him; they send the police to take him at his prayers, and get him crucified out of their immediate way. When will the opprobrium cease, that the inspiration of the future is the blasphemy of to-day?

Never, so long as men allow their external life to tyrannize as it now does over their internal, and gather their moral judgment from observation of others instead of reflection upon themselves. So far has this habit been pushed that it has shaped itself into a systematic theory of morals, based upon the hollow doctrine that our personal sentiments of right and wrong are the mere reflection of other men's opinions of us; and that *they* again approve and disapprove of us not from any instinct of admiration and disgust, but in order to extort from us as many serviceable acts as possible, and give us a direct interest in benefiting them. This notion, however absurd as a piece of philosophy, is only too faithful an embodiment of current modes of practical thought. The belief is widely prevalent that if it were not for the restraining coercion of public opinion, every man would break loose, and no barrier check the wildest demoralization:—a belief which shows the most ludicrous ignorance of the real constitution of human nature. And even professed moralists do not blush to give us the shameful precept, to ask ourselves in our self-examination, 'how do we appear in other people's eyes?' Can we not then reach the seat of our own pure vision? and is there also no eye of God? Whoever looks for the reflection of himself in the countenance of others, is 'like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.' He must look deeper, 'into the perfect law of liberty,' the divine condition of his own Free-will, the inherent worth of the principles that guide

and the affections that impel him, ere he can become 'not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work.' Till, by deep communion with his own heart, he gains the knowledge of himself and finds how in the recesses of his own nature the living oracles of God are hidden, he cannot even have true insight into the minds of other men. He wants the very key of interpretation, and stumbling among mere external signs and conventional rules, will pass a thousand false and foolish judgments. His criticisms will be like those of the empty-minded connoisseur, looking round some splendid gallery of art without any perception of beauty or feeling for expression, but with only a string of names and dates and celebrities to guide his professions of admiration. Nothing really good, nothing deeply binding, nothing unspeakably divine, reveals itself to him. To such a mind there is neither solemnity in duty nor preternatural horror in guilt. He cannot '*Stand in awe* and sin not,' until he sinks deeper into his heart, where the Spirit dwells by which 'spiritual things are discerned.'

In short, to live by outward rule alone and serve as the mere example of a code, is to crystalize into a cluster of human habits, becoming ever easier, never higher; and thereby to miss the very materials of the everlasting hope. If righteousness is nothing but legality in act, delivering itself off in repeated rounds, there is no difference between the first beat and the most recent; it is but a millwork, circling without a flaw. It realizes its intent at once; and be the cycles few or many, it frustrates no promise it has made. When stopped off and silent, it may be missed by others whom it had served; but the intrinsic purpose of its being has not failed. Periodicity does not define its own duration; indefinite continuance is wanted only for natures that *grow* towards an invisible perfection and have yet to be what they are not now. Hence the prayer of the

soul for a less fleeting life than this betrays a consciousness of powers unexhausted here, and needing only opportunity to transcend the cramping frame-work of experience. To justify his craving for immortality, Man must be the chrysalis of the Angel, and the Angel partaker of the essence of God: in that cry he does but say 'That which is born of the spirit is spirit,' and break away from all the barriers of kind. And, to enter on this expansion of scale, you must pass from the outer to the inner life. The measure of external action is prescribed by your *lot*; in which, however small, there is still room for the largest mind and the loveliest goodness to work. Not till we surrender to the voice of the spirit which flows in upon us beyond the proclamations of the Law, not till we emerge from obedient conduct into love and faith and the enthusiasm of holiness, have we found the true baptism of the Christian life. This emancipation of the labouring will into the glow of aspiring affections is the new birth of the twice-born, the beginning of heaven below, the dawning consciousness of fellowship with Christ and God. When once it is revealed to us that righteousness is to be sought where the Heart-searcher seeks it, not in the material thing done, but in the spiritual spring from which it issues, we discover that it may indeed be infinite, and stretch in advance of a progressive nature, as the object of eternal aspiration. He that is faithful in the first alternative that tests him, not only acts more promptly but also sees further in the next: each little grace invites a larger; and his step being upwards, his view is wider. New modes of affection stir within him, and remodel the order of his ideal life; even filling, it may be, with unsuspected meaning the language of saintly souls,—which before had been to him as the jargon of an unknown tongue. It is not in childhood only, but ever after, that the well-ordered mind asserts its

expansiveness in all its capacities and dimensions at once. The Reason, it is admitted, may for ever learn, and in learning for ever grow, and penetrate further into the *Truth* of things. But the Conscience too has a field not less boundless and an apprehension as fine in tracing the lines and discerning the relations of the *Good*. And the enthusiasm of Love, carried through these two infinitudes, divides into new varieties, and glows with deeper intensity, till the Will, no longer struggling and panting on its way, is picked up as by winged steeds, and borne heavenward in a chariot of fire. To such translation into higher spheres tends the secret of God, which, whether we know it or not, we hide within us. And the first step to its discovery and its power is, always to take the ease of doing well as the Divine summons to do better.

PRAYER.

THOU Holiest, whose Spirit bloweth where it listeth ! heedless as we are, pass us not by in our unfaithfulness, but speak to us in thy still voice ; and as we cover our head and hear, may we hush our idle words, and lay low our guilty pride, and drop every burden of our hearts, that we may be open to thy renewing grace and moulded by thy consecrating will. Amid the outer turmoil of the world thou reservest for us an inner silence of the spirit, where thou wilt ever meet us and give us peace. May the labour of our hands never stop the prayer of our hearts. Cease not to call us to thy secret place : there send the sprinkling of thy dews upon our dry affections : and breathe thou abroad to loose every band of our contracted souls. AMEN.

HYMN.

‘ **W**HERE is your God ? ’ they say :
Answer them, Lord most holy !

Reveal thy secret way
Of visiting the lowly :
Not wrapped in moving cloud,
Or nightly-resting fire ;
But veiled within the shroud
Of silent, high desire.

Come not in flashing storm,
Or bursting frown of thunder :
Come in the viewless form
Of wakening love and wonder ;—
Of duty grown divine,
The restless spirit still ;
Of sorrows taught to shine,
As shadows of thy will.

O God ! the pure alone,—
E’en in their deep confessing,—
Can see thee as their own,
And find the perfect blessing ;
Yet to each waiting soul
Speak in thy still, small voice,
Till broken love’s made whole,
And saddened hearts rejoice.

James Martineau.



CHARM OF CHARACTER.

BY REV. H. ENFIELD DOWSON, B.A.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.—Prov. viii. 17.

THERE are various human characters which exercise upon all comers a wonderful charm, so that just to be in their presence is delightful. I think generally the secret is that they are so happy in themselves that they make all around them happy. They live in a radiant atmosphere that seems to make the faces of all who come within it to shine. What delightful memories we all have of intercourse with such people! Far, far away, back into my childhood, I remember here one and there another of them. And I do not know what, in all my life, has ever done me more good than hours spent with them. They are the very salt of the earth. In truth, their light so shines before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Heavenly Father.

And what is the secret of the beauty of such lives? Not all exactly the same. There are more secrets than one of a beautiful and happy life. Certainly there is one thing that is *not* the secret. No outward circumstance can either give or take away that Divine peace of mind that shines through the eyes and illumines all the place where the sweet, pure soul dwells. It is the very glory of these best and brightest men and women that nothing upsets

and nothing disturbs them. They are not more favoured than others in their outward conditions. They have their pains, their sicknesses, their sorrows, their losses, their aggravations, like others. But whatever comes, they will not repine; they have not got such a thing as ill-temper about them; they will not be aggravated. A sour expression is never seen on their countenances; a bitter word never escapes their lips. The peace of God that passes understanding, and that the world can neither give nor take away, is their continual portion. What is one of the secrets? It is a clear and unstained conscience: it is a mind at ease. The man who has this can go through every trial with a happy smile upon his lips, and with serene content in his heart.

I suppose one of the most trying experiences of life is to be suspected and accused, and to be misrepresented before the world. But after all, what does it matter to the soul strong in its own integrity? This is where the sweet and gracious spirit of the man that is without reproach comes out most perfectly. False imputations have no power to trouble him. They do not ruffle his composure. He can wait the time when his clear record will be acknowledged. While others who are conscience stricken will smart and wince under accusations that go home, he who is conscience free will quietly abide till the day of his vindication; and if it never comes before human eyes, what matter, if in the presence of God it is always there?

There is nothing grander than the calm and peaceful courage with which the man thus conscious of his own integrity meets every attack. It is inspiring and beautiful to behold. Or, if more material blows fall upon the life, if loss, bereavement, sickness come, what a secret of sweet uncomplaining resignation there is in the soul at peace still with God and man!

Who has not been brought under the spell of the heavenly peace and trust of some pure spirits whom trouble does nothing to embitter, but who seem only sweetened and refined by it as by a refining fire? Their secret lies in their unsullied life, which feels in all circumstances equally under the blessing of God.

Alas! how different from this is the querulous irritable spirit of so many; if anything goes amiss, they are vexed and peevish, and most likely vent their rage on all about them. They are the worst of companions, their society is anything but charming. Their troubles are a ceaseless source of aggravation to others, and amid them they have not a pleasant look or a pleasant word for a living soul. If they are attacked they know nothing better than ill-natured abuse in return. And what is the secret here? The secret is a mind ill-at-ease, without any settled inward peace to fall back upon; the secret lies in a disturbed conscience. With it there is nothing but misery, when the dark and troubled days of life come. God preserve us from such a fate!

But if we look to the most complete source of happiness in this world, and to the secret of the sweetest of all the charms of human character, I think it is found in its perfection in the absence of all thought and memory of self, and, above all, in unselfish love. What a wondrous beauty and fascination there is in a life that is devoid of affectation, that does not trouble itself about its own honour or dignity, that has absolutely no personal end to serve, but is entirely taken up with purposes outside its own petty interests! How grand is the devotion, for instance, of the man of science to his inspiring pursuit of new truth! He is lost in it. He himself is nowhere and nothing; the realm of infinite truth lies before him, and if he can move on but one step into its divine mysteries, that is all he lives for.

How fine, too, the worship of the artist for his art ! It takes him quite out of himself into the great world of beauty ; absorbed in the creation of his chisel or his brush, he is lifted above every mean and selfish thought.

And how, too, the great singer, the great player, the great poet, the great orator is borne up and up, out of himself, by the inspiration of his genius ! At other times he may fall back into meaner thoughts, but while the glow of devotion to his high calling is upon him, he is nowhere, he passes out of the bounds of his own little life into the glorious thing that he is doing. How different this from the circumscribed and narrow life of one who has no higher thing to think about than his own precious self, his dignity, his aches or his pains ! There is an unspeakable delight in coming into the presence of a soul lifted by grand themes and occupations out of its own narrow bounds. It is a mean and weary thing to see man or woman self engrossed, and having no high or wide interests to serve, no grand ideals to reach. To be enrolled in such large service of God and of his truth and beauty, is the secret of the most glorious and unadulterated happiness, while the man who has no far-reaching, soul-engrossing aims is tied down to little and mean thoughts, and is always in danger of the misery of a selfish life.

But an even greater and surer preservation against this misery is the heart full of love of others. And of all the graces of humanity, nothing can compare with this in its charm. I spoke of the memory, from my boyhood, of some sweet souls under the breath of whose influence I was then often brought. The sweetest thing about them was the utterly self-forgetful love that seemed to shine from them in every act, and word, and look. And as years have rolled over my head, and as my experience of human character has increased, I have learned ever more and more to love the

presence of these self-forgetful souls, and to regard them as the very sweetest and brightest, and by far the happiest of mankind. Their pleasures lie in things that none can take from them, and that never are taken from them, while life lasts. Their pleasures lie in the most blessed joy on earth, living for others, thinking of others, doing for others, in spreading around them happiness wherever they go, in making faces to shine with gladness as they meet them, in making all men the better for their presence. This divine and Christ-like occupation so engrosses them, that they never have a moment to spare to think about anything so uninteresting as themselves. For nothing is truer, than that all the dullest moments of life are those in which we have no one but ourselves to work for or to please, and that all the highest, most delightful moments of life are those in which our thoughts and energies are carried away in a boundless love and service of others.

While I think of this secret of the most beautiful of all the charms of the Christian character, I cannot help lamenting how many of us miss it, and, in missing it, are to be pitied beyond measure. The doctrine 'every one for himself' means 'every one miserable.' The world is not so constructed that we can have exactly all that we want. Sooner or later trouble comes to every one, things cross us and our desires, and if our continual aim is just to fulfil our own selfish wishes, it means constant disappointment. No happiness is got that way, but only grumbling, discontent, and dissatisfaction. And there is one thing that comes from the selfish way of looking at life that is the most pitiable and lamentable of all conditions of mind: it is the spirit of jealousy of others, it is the spirit of him who is always looking to his own advancement and honour and dignity, and who grudges any of these things to another.

What heart-burnings people lay up for themselves who let their lives drift that unfortunate and disastrous way ! I never, as long as I live, shall forget a passage in Macready's life, in which he confessed to the misery he suffered, when a new actor came out, owing to his jealous anxiety lest the new star should outshine him. Of all the miserable fruits of selfishness, I think jealousy of the good things that befall others is the most wretched. For him or her who lets in the green-eyed monster there is never any peace. All life is a sort of standing on the watch lest any one else should be promoted to higher honour or obtain greater advantages than the selfish soul who watches. Why, to the simple, loving, Christian heart there is joy in every particle of happiness that falls to the lot of anyone. To see anything well done, and any honour gained by anybody, is a delight.

And this is one of the sources of the sweet pleasure such people spread around them. They, in their glorious self-forgetfulness, wish every living soul well ; and the sunshine of Divine love beams from their eyes on everybody. Would to God that this beautiful spirit could drive out of all our hearts the horrid demon of jealousy that now so often mars the happiness of our souls ! Let us every one pray to our Heavenly Father that never again, even in our inmost minds, will we let an envious thought come between us and any brother or sister, but think so completely of the happiness and good of each other, that there will be no room in our hearts even to remember ourselves.



HYMN.

THE rose is queen among the flowers,
 None other is so fair ;
 The lily nodding on her stem
 With fragrance fills the air.
 But sweeter than the lily's breath,
 And than the rose more fair,
 The tender love of human hearts,
 That springeth everywhere.

The rose will fade and fall away,
 The lily, too, will die ;
 But love shall live for evermore
 Beyond the starry sky.
 Then sweeter than the lily's breath
 And than the rose more fair,
 The tender love of human hearts
 Upspringing everywhere.

F. L. Hosmer.

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD, our heavenly Father, we, Thy children,
 bow down before Thee to seek Thy blessing on our
 lives. We would dedicate them afresh to Thee in utter
 self-forgetfulness. We seek Thy Spirit in our souls,
 whereby we may live for all things high and beautiful, and,
 most of all, for the life-long service of Thee and our fellow-
 men. We pray for an ever-larger share in the life that
 breathed in Christ, our holy brother. Give us, O our
 Father, such love as his even unto death ; and may no

selfish thought, we beseech Thee, ever enter our minds, and no selfish desire ever arise in our hearts, but by Thy Divine grace may we become true disciples of him who on the cross fulfilled the words he spake, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'—AMEN.



THE SERVICE ALL MAY RENDER.

BY REV. V. D. DAVIS, B.A.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.—Psalm xcvi. 9.

Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.—2 Tim. ii. 15.

God loveth a cheerful giver.—2 Cor. ix. 7.

IN Robert Browning's poem 'The Boy and the Angel' we have a parable of the great truth, that in the universal song of gratitude and praise rising from earth to heaven, not even the humblest voice can be silent without being missed, and that the faithful service of even the least and weakest of the children of men, though perhaps unnoticed by the world, is needed in its appointed place in God's kingdom, and can be supplied by no one else.

'Morning, evening, noon and night,
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.
Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.
Hard he laboured, long and well;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.[¶]
But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"
Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.'

This grateful song of praise, springing from the boy's heart, faithful in his humble task, simple and sincere, rose to the Father in heaven and was continually 'the voice of his delight.' And so when the boy, growing up, passed out of

his humble place and became a priest in the church, and afterwards in the very highest place, Pope at Rome,—however much it might be to him to serve God (as he thought) in that greater way, there was something missing from the harmony of praise, *because the child's voice was silent*. Even the great Angel who went down to fill the empty place, which Theocrite had left, could not offer just that sweet simplicity of the child's thankfulness, and the Father said :

‘ I miss my little human praise.’

That is the parable. And it contains a beautiful thought, which will often be very helpful, when we are inclined to be discouraged and depressed about our life, to think that it is so little we can do, that no one cares, and it is no matter what we do or what we are. It brings back the melody of life and gladness into the heart, a fresh spring of energy and hope.

We have a place of our own, which no one else can fill. All that we can do is needed, and must be done in simplicity and trust and gladness. Even though our work seem utterly insignificant, we cannot measure its worth, when *as duty* it is faithfully done. There may be many talents, or only one, committed to our care. That depends on our Father's will, not ours. Only what we do with them depends upon ourselves. We may have large opportunities of work and great powers of endurance and useful activity, or we may be like the poor widow, who threw her two mites into the treasury, yet they were all she had. And though we may be utterly poor and weak in our capacity for work, yet if we give cheerfully all we can, it is acceptable service in the sight of God. And besides the actual things which we can do there are the cheerfulness, the patience, the thankfulness, which may fill our hearts, and these no less are an offering to the Father of all, which no one else can give for us.

If instead of these we suffer ourselves to be possessed by morbid and gloomy thoughts, by a bitter and selfish spirit, we let a cloud rest on the one little spot of God's earth, where we alone have control, and where we might make sunshine; we are spoiling the harmony of praise, that should rise in gratitude and reverence to the Father in heaven.

It is not always easy to keep that store of sunshine in the heart. But until cheerfulness and gratitude become our habitual temper, it ought to be to us a constant aim and a distinct work of faithfulness, to gain more of that true spirit in our life.

'God loveth a cheerful giver.' And just to keep good temper, and if we cannot be light-hearted, yet to have sweetness and not sourness within, to have patience and hopeful trust, as everyone may who has been in the least touched by the truth of the Christian Gospel, this is to give a great deal to the world, and to render a perpetual act of worship to the Father in heaven.

If at times the darkness overshadows us, the gross darkness of evil, and we are oppressed by the thought of many dreary passages of human history and all the moral wretchedness and confusion that there are in the world now as in the past, we must seek our help in the one thought of God alone. It is impossible for us to understand the whole wide reach of divine providence: but we can understand patience and hope and trust in God. The very darkness is a witness to the light, and the pain we suffer declares that it is contrary to the law of our being that this evil should remain.

Our salvation lies in the way of strenuous and faithful service. We are not meant to bear the whole burden of the Universe, but to be true in our own lowly place. When we have given ourselves up with perfect surrender

to truth and righteousness and honour, and know that these above all else must be our life, then we shall also be able to rest in the conviction that righteousness is the power of God, which must prevail at last.

Then also we have joy in the thought that nothing can separate us from the love of God. There can be for us no fear or loneliness or desolation, since in any place we are with him, and can be true to him and to ourselves, and live out faithfully the life which he intends for us.

II. The lesson of cheerfulness and unselfish patience is constantly brought home to us when we turn from our own life, often so restless and troubled, to the calmness and beauty of the world of Nature about us. Even in the dullest season of the year there come gleams of beautiful light, and the promise and the hope of brighter days never fail. And we are never left quite without the ministry of flowers, those silent but persuasive preachers of the goodness of God. Hear, for instance, what Wordsworth says of the Daisy, the commonest of wayside flowers :

Bright Flower ! whose home is everywhere,
 Bold in maternal Nature's care,
 And all the long year through the heir
 Of joy and sorrow—
 Methinks that there abides in thee
 Some concord with humanity,
 Given to no other flower I see
 The forest thorough !

Is it that Man is soon deprest ?
 A thoughtless thing ! who, once unblest,
 Does little on his memory rest,
 Or on his reason,
 And thou wouldst teach him how to find
 A shelter under every wind,
 A hope for times that are unkind
 And every season,

Thou wander'st the wide world about,
Unchecked by pride or scrupulous doubt,
With friends to greet thee, or without,
 Yet pleased and willing;
Meek, yielding to th' occasion's call,
And all things suffering for all,
Thy function apostolical
 In peace fulfilling.

So the little flower does its part. And with the daisies think of all the others, which come every year in their untold myriads, often unnoticed, in places where perhaps men have never been, yet each in its appointed place, living out its simple life, and all together making up so much of the fragrant beauty of the earth.

Such abundance of life cannot be without meaning in the order of God's providence. The old Hebrew poet pictured nobly the time of creation, when, before any man was there, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' And looking still deeper than the poet's imagery in reverent faith, we ought surely to feel that the infinite One, even God himself, has delight in all these glories of creation. In this abundant beauty of the world, formed by perfect grace and order in every minutest part, *there is joy*, which in this way breaks out of the universal heart of things, and bears witness to the goodwill, the Love, which is the Fountain of all being.

Such a message from the Unseen ought not to remain unheeded by us.

The fulness of divine Power is in every place, throughout this boundless universe. We cannot go where God is not. He works in the unity of law and steadfast purpose, and in marvellous beauty even in the tiniest of created things. And as we see that nothing is indifferent to him, and in the lowliest place there is this quickening touch of divine beauty, we surely ought to be convinced that no human

life is forgotten or out of reach of the Father's love: and that it cannot be indifferent to him what we become. It ought to give us cheerful trust and quietness in the thought that we have our place to fill, and we are needed surely no less than the flowers to make the gladness of the world.

'If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' Only there is this difference. God makes the flowers, without choice or effort of their own, perfectly beautiful: a perpetual rippling light of gladness over the face of the earth. Born for the moment, each little one fulfils its task and is gone, followed by an endless succession of others, poured out of the fullness of the divine joy in creation.

But man is called to a different life and a higher destiny. His service must be rendered with living intelligence in reverent obedience. He receives not the gift of passive perfectness in a moment, but the capacity *to make his life beautiful*, for he is called to be a child of God.

The sunlight of divine Love falls upon him, he is refreshed by the dews of heaven; but then there has to be his own living response. While he receives gifts of divine grace from above, he has to give himself, and render back in reverent adoration and thankfulness and willing obedience all that has been given to quicken within him the true spirit of life.

And so while we take to heart the lesson of the flowers, and are glad sometimes to escape from our life of effort into their calmer atmosphere, we yet have this greater happiness. In our appointed place we may not only rest in perfect quietness in our Father's care, and in the love and joy which he gives to us, but *we ourselves have love to give*. 'We love God, because he first loved us.' And we can prove it in our gratitude and trust, in the faithful service of integrity, the cheerful giving of self, which as love is spread

like sunshine over the earth and is anxious only to do the Father's will.

Then even the humblest life gains a dignity and worth of its own, for all that it can give is needed. It may be that there is hardly anything that we can *do*, which seems worthy of the name of service; and yet it is a great deal, if in our own place we keep the true and reverent spirit, and treasure in secret the strong unselfish love, which will be ready to go out into action whenever the occasion comes. For 'they also serve who only stand and wait.'

If we will but trust in the inward witness of the Spirit with our spirit that we are children of God, it brings a wonderful gladness into life, even to the humblest and weakest. The loneliest hour may then be full of happy thoughts, for even for the friendless among men there is the one never-failing Friend. We may delight in all that is beautiful and glorious in the universe, and read in it the language of One who cares for us also, who *means* this message of sublimity and joy for us. We may have fellowship in spirit with the noblest of the children of men, even though outwardly in the world we are far from any such; we may love their truth and faithfulness and the graces of all beautiful lives, knowing again that these are a sure witness to the Father's holy purpose, and the greatness of the spiritual life to which we are called. And we may be with the Father in secret, offering to him the prayer of a humble heart, in patience and cheerful submission, keeping the courts of that inner temple clean, suffering no intrusion of irreverence or ignoble clamour, waiting only for the silent coming of the Holiest. So, by giving ourselves, the best we can be, we render acceptable service.

Such a secret trust and consecrated purpose will often help one through dreary times, when there seems little profit in life and little to be done. When all else fails

there is yet patience to give, and reverence and trust : and not the largeness of the gift, but the spirit of the giver is the measure of its worth.

‘ In the elder days of art
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part ;
For the gods see everywhere.
Let us do our work as well,
Both the unseen and the seen,
Make the house where God may dwell
Beautiful, entire, and clean.’

It is a purpose rich in quiet happiness, if we realise that we may always give this inward service, and that our Father finds in such lowly praise ‘ the voice of his delight.’

When thus we learn to be with him, all the work we can do, that is good and useful, is better ordered. We have the *true spirit* of life, which will keep us from confusion and despair even in the hardest straits. It will make us brave and strong to believe in life, and patiently to work and hope, even amid discouragement and disappointment, for the coming of the divine kingdom on earth.

Known or unknown of men, with the world’s honour or forgetfulness, we shall have the deeper peace, which is ours in communion with the Unseen, which belongs to those who have learnt to rest in the unchanging love of God.



HYMN.

O THOU who art of all that is
 Beginning both and end,
 We follow Thee through unknown paths,
 Since all to Thee must tend :
 Thy judgments are a mighty deep
 Beyond all fathom-line ;
 Our wisdom is the child-like heart,
 Our strength, to trust in Thine.

We bless Thee for the skies above,
 And for the earth beneath,
 For hopes that blossom here below
 And wither not with death ;
 But most we bless Thee for thyself,
 O heavenly light within,
 Whose dayspring in our hearts dispels
 The darkness of our sin.

Be Thou in joy our deeper joy,
 Our comfort when distressed ;
 Be Thou by day our strength for toil,
 And Thou by night our rest,
 And when these earthly dwellings fail,
 And time's last hour is come,
 Be Thou, O God, our dwelling-place
 And our eternal home.

F. L. Hosmer.

PRAYER.

O THOU, who callest us to life, and revealest to the humble heart the blessedness of heavenly peace, make us wise to choose the things which belong to our peace. Let us be in this world as seeing the Invisible, gratefully using every gift of thy good providence, reverently searching out thy law, not blind to the wonder and beauty that are all about us, not so engrossed in the pursuit of temporal things as to neglect those things which are eternal.

Teach us to order our whole life in accordance with thy will, that we may be faithful in our daily work and all our dealings with men, that we may make no peace with unrighteousness, but bear our witness to the strength and excellence of the divine law of justice and integrity. Help us to be without fear of the face of man, boldly to declare thy truth as it is clear to us, glad to suffer if need be, and to give ourselves for the service of thy kingdom. Make us more considerate of our fellow-men, with true compassion and sympathy for all; and let no good cause be indifferent to us. Save us from the shame and bitterness of causing others to offend. Make us helpers of those who are weak, who are discouraged and oppressed by the burden of a hard life. Let us be thy messengers of hope and gladness, in the pure spirit of Christ, showing that faith can overcome the world and redeem from sin and give patience and good hope in time of trouble.

Father, we thank Thee for the light that comes to us amid the shadows and sore trials of our life, for the cheerful spirit of submission, the chastened heart, the meekness and compassion which have so often been the outcome of affliction, and make the cross our emblem of divinest life.

We thank Thee for the strength and joy which come to

us in things honourable, pure, and true, for all that is innocent and bright and beautiful here on earth, for the many happy homes of this land and throughout the world, for the joy of friendship and all human sympathy. We thank Thee for the sacred memories which belong to our treasures of heaven, for every life which has been faithfully lived and is now hidden from our sight, and that communion with the unseen which lifts up our hearts in the calmness of hope and contemplation of the greater joy which is to come.

Help us so to live that we may never be separated from the knowledge of thy love, that no shadow of evil may darken our heavenward outlook. Lead us and keep us from day to day, strong in thy strength, in the reverent and trustful spirit of Christ, that we may enter more and more perfectly into the true life of the children of God.—AMEN.

THE PRODIGAL'S ELDER BROTHER.

BY REV. A. N. BLATCHFORD, B.A.

'Son! thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.'—
Luke xv. 31.

IT may not be immediately, or strikingly, apparent, yet it is none the less a fact, that this beautiful and touching story of the poor prodigal carries with it identically the same significance as the tale of those virgins, against half of whom 'the door was shut.'

A difference there is, in the two allegories, most clearly discernable, but only such a difference as is involved in two aspects of the same object: although that difference in the present instance appears so great as apparently to make us think that the teaching itself is diverse in the two cases.

Human sin, and carelessness;—loss of opportunities, waste of means, and bitter self-reproach; with pity and love hovering the while, like ministering angels, over it all—such seems to be the sweep of this the most helpful, as it surely is the most pathetic, of all the 'stories from the lips of the Teacher.' And yet, if we give ourselves to a closer observation of the matter, we come to see how this, and that seemingly sadder picture of the foolish ones debarred from joy they might have had, really balance one another. If we steadily contemplate transgression, wilfulness, and contempt of all wise and restraining affection, by themselves, and in themselves, the outlook cannot but be

very dark, very sad ; possibly it may appear even hopeless. But, cast on these sombre subjects the light of God's Fatherhood, and of His tireless love, and a very dayspring of hope begins to scatter the shadows of terror and mistrust. Then indeed we do begin to feel that the things dear to God shall conquer, and, through the child's endeavour, and the parent's aid, goodness, and purity, and loving service shall rule at last the heart that selfish indulgence had so sorrowfully held in thrall.

That is just the comforting teaching of this matchless picture of the repentant wanderer, but in no way at all does it obliterate that other allegory that depicts the sure results of carelessness. Both of these parables tell us with equal truth and equal solemnity that it is impossible for us to obviate the necessary, and the rightful consequences of our wrong, of our folly, or even of our forgetfulness.

A warning alike identical, and salutary, is delivered to us in both these stories : and when, in the one case, the folly-stricken ones found the door inexorably closed against them, and when, in the other instance, the loving father declared to that elder son so steadfast in his integrity—
'All that I have is thine !'—the very same lesson is taught, and ill shall it be for any of us, if, upon our course through life, we choose selfishly or sentimentally to blind ourselves thereto.

'It is *thine*,' said the father to his trusted and faithful elder son ;—all was *his*, now ;—the broad acres, the well-filled coffers,—yea, and, above all, that good name that his father had reproachlessly borne before him.

Search the Scriptures through and through, and there shall be found no surer tribute to goodness, no heartier acknowledgment of loyal duty steadfastly rendered.

And this too, be it well noted, at the very moment when the good parent's heart was filled to overflowing

with gratitude, and joy, and hope new born, at the knowledge that the poor, broken, conscience-stricken spend-thrift and wanderer had indeed come back,—like some bright bird with bruised and failing pinion,—to find its sure rest at last in the bosom of a father's unforgetting love.

Ah! there is all pathos, all beauty, all trust encircling the thought of God's forgiveness of our recklessness, and of our wrong-doing; but there is no foolish, unreal, sentimentalism about it. God is not eternally making the sinner just as the righteous,—putting him back, so to speak, in his old place, as if there never had been any deflection therefrom. And surely, this is what Jesus meant when he figured that parent, in his love, leaning upon the good, and proved, and reliable elder son, confessing with affection, all which that son had done, and had been to him, and acknowledging the very rights which that son's reproachless conduct and service involved—*'Son! thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine!'*

Too exclusively, perhaps, have preachers dwelt upon the prodigal himself; people have been urged, with very wide iteration, to think of him, somewhat at the expense of his elder brother. We have been again and again exhorted to think of him as forgiven, and of the evil he had wrought as all forgotten, and so men have been tempted to regard the consequences of his wrong-doing as having been for ever done away with. That he was forgiven we may with reverent thankfulness admit; and well for us all is it that we can believe that we stand beneath the hand of one whom we think of as the Father of love—of love infinite in its scope, and in its wisdom. But the vital question is, did that father abrogate the actual and necessary results of the poor lad's self-indulgence and extravagance? To any such question the answer follows swiftly and clearly enough. When the

goods were divided evenly between the two sons, by the parent in whose eyes both of them were alike dear, the younger took his portion and spent it wildly on Dead-sea fruit that gave about as much abiding satisfaction as may be got out of dust and ashes. The wealth was gone, and no magician's spell might avail to conjure it back again into the young man's once well-filled scrip. Dearly, indeed, had he paid for the experience he had won; and when he came to himself, and realized the hard facts of his position, he returned to find his own share of that noble patrimony irretrievably dissipated, whilst his brother's was rightfully prospering, nay, more, he must needs listen to his good father's frank acknowledgment that it was the elder brother now who was master over land, and means, and men,—aye, over all that the father had.

No other tale more truly breathes the air of love, and tenderness, and free and full forgiveness, but notwithstanding all this, there is still in it a solemn reminder of the experience of those hapless ones against whom we are told 'the door was shut.'—Here is a spectacle of means wasted, of the chances of a life-time flung back for many a weary year, of the purpose of life missed almost entirely! These things even a repentant prodigal must endure to recognise. And yet it is just at this very point that there rises into renewed life that hope, with which the allegory of the Prodigal Son irradiates the apparently deeper gloom that wraps the tale of the Ten Virgins.

The stronger one's discipline in life grows, the more solemn becomes the whole subject of sin, and forgiveness, and rehabilitation of character. Surely we may recognise the truth that the dealing of that father with his erring, but ever beloved child, in the parable, is of the very kind with which our experience in life familiarises us. And although the opportunity may be lightly flung away, and

strength, and means, and the occasions for self-command may be disregarded, still, whilst we may not, and shall not get all these back again—is there yet nothing that comes to bless us, and to comfort us, and to uplift us in the hour of our sincere desire for forgiveness?

God may forgive us; our loved ones here around us may make amplest and tenderest allowance for us;—but, can we forgive ourselves? And thus there certainly rises within our souls an abhorrence of evil; the sin begins to look so exceeding sinful; and we reach at last a convincing and a chastening knowledge of the untiring love, without which, in wilful hour, we thought we might do fairly well.

Aye, and methinks that same love that would not grow faint, that would not consent to acknowledge that the wandering son might be given up for lost, that waited and watched, and saw him ‘while he was yet a great way off,’—that same fatherly love, and the myriad recurring evidences of it in the midst of the sweet old home life that he humbly took up once again—why, it must have been to him a veritable conscience, ever appealing to him, ever asking him how he could have grown impatient of it, and of the surroundings so simple, and so quiet, that that love transfigured and glorified. What honest, self-purifying shame must he not have known under the thought that he had been content to revel so long in the baser community of those selfish ones, who fed upon him in prosperity, then flung him away like fruit from which they had drawn the sweetness, and at last callously left him to the chance of actual starvation, from which the swine’s husks alone saved him.

Things wore a different aspect to him at that moment of sure self-abasement, when he honestly deemed himself unworthy of sonship to such a father:—

‘ I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on :
I loved to choose, and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on !
I loved the garish day ; and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will ; *remember not past years !* ’

Yes, —a new heart, a new life, a new way of looking at things altogether, such is the abiding reward of true repentance unto all souls ; that reward is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

And in the contemplation of that ever-vivid story that we know and feel to shadow out our own personal experiences, we can well fancy the reckless one, coming at last to see how just was the honest indignation of the brother, whose anger against the wanderer sprang simply from his own reverence and love for the kind father whom the prodigal one had so lightly left, and so long forgotten. That very anger must have come to be looked at by the repentant one but as one of the just and righteous consequences of his own folly ; because we have need to remember that when good men do blame us for our transgressions, be these wilful, or careless, it is no part of ours to meet that blame with unworthy anger ; but we have, without murmuring, to take the healthgiving discipline herein provided, and so to strive that we too may come to see our errors as others saw them, and to acknowledge at last that the condemnation we receive at the hands of a good man is but one of the natural consequences—one of the divinely appointed correctives —of our own unworthiness.

For him, in the story, the tinsel pleasures that glittered for a moment had shrivelled in the flame of life’s fierce experience, but the spirit of the man had reached a sure knowledge of itself unknown before. Ah, think but of the full meaning of that piteous appeal,—‘ Make me as one of

thy hired servants !' Anything, now, rather than absence again from the father's side ; the most menial work, the scantiest livelihood, all should be welcome rather than the unreal, barren, and wretched life, wherein that once brave young spirit had indeed made all but shipwreck of itself !

And can we fail to imagine, even for a moment, that the good elder brother was without *his* mission in the renewing of the prodigal's life ? Surely not : but, as the younger one painfully trod step by step upon the returning path back to self-respecting life again, can we not think how the quiet, earnest life of the elder one wrought with a steadying influence on the younger till he, in turn, was so drawn to the good, strong life of his faithful brother as almost to worship him, by and by. And so, he would take daily pattern from his simple spirit of duty, until one sad day as the father was laid quietly in his last rest, the brother, that was found again, leaned with all his trust upon the elder one, who had done more than we may think to save him to duty and to confirm him in the love of it. And the prodigal one reached a true manhood, full of earnestness for all that was good, and yet, from the very memory of his own transgressions and wanderings full of deep pity for others in like case. And thus, he, too, with sins repented of, and life amended, followed the good elder brother, into that rest, which, we believe, remaineth for the people of God.

PRAYER.

FATHER of pity, and of wisdom, who searchest the hearts of all the sons of men, we come before Thee with sincerity in our hearts, and with reverence on our lips. We kneel together, in thy holy presence, mindful of the myriad blessings that brighten this life ; and, seeking

that help of thine that never fails, we bring to Thee the confession of our past transgression, and of our present need. Let perfect trust in thine all-wise and infinite compassion lift every soul far above the shadows of despair. Touch us ever more deeply by the remembrance of that beloved master who revealed unto us the mighty possibilities of the nature which Thou hast bidden us share with him; and inspire us all, thereby, we do beseech Thee, with an enduring hope and a lofty courage, that so we may tread life's path with integrity, bear our several burdens with patience, and conquer at last the self-love that so often stands between our own hearts and the peace of God.

Ever with a surer power may conscience testify of right and wrong; and we ourselves find no real rest for our souls save in the endeavour, constant and sincere, to think, to speak, to toil, and to live, after the spotless pattern of him who bade us call Thee our Father which art in heaven. AMEN.

HYMN.

O THOU great friend to all the sons of men,
 Who once appeared in humblest guise below,
 Sin to rebuke, to break the captive's chain,
 And call thy brethren forth from want and woe;
 We look to thee! Thy Truth is still the Light
 Which guides the nations groping on their way,
 Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,
 Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.

Yes! thou art still the Life; thou art the Way
 The holiest know; Light, Life, and Way of heaven,
 And they who dearest hope, and deepest pray,
 Toil by the Light, Life, Way, which thou hast given.

Theodore Parker.

WE ARE SAVED BY HOPE.

By REV. J. E. MANNING, M.A.

By hope were we saved ; but hope that is seen is not hope : for who hopeth for that which he seeth ? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.—Romans viii. 24, 25.

WHAT insight into human character was possessed by the Apostle Paul ! If there is one mark which distinguishes the *prophet of humanity* from the mere *observer of men*, it is the power of penetrating beneath the outer surface of life, and of understanding, in their full breadth and scope, the emotions that sway men's lives.

In the words of my text, the apostle is speaking of the power of hope as an incentive to progress. It not only urges us onward, he says, but it prevents us from stagnating when we have reached the object of our hope ; for fresh hope for the attainment of something higher and better is immediately and spontaneously born. But when attainment is an accomplished fact, *that* hope is past. Hope that is accomplished is not hope ; for who hopeth for that which he seeth already in his possession ? But hope does not leave us then. Hope is perennial, an ever-living fount. New hope bursts forth, as the water gushes from the spring. And when one hope is accomplished, there is

always another and a higher to take its place. And when we hope for that which we see not yet as ours, then do we with patience wait for it, and with diligence work for it.

Let us take an illustration. The traveller in an unknown land, who wishes to explore it, to know how it lies, what it contains, how far its forests and its plains extend, looks out for some mountain from the elevation of which he can best survey it. He climbs to one height, and it takes him clear of the wood, showing how the forest in the distance is bounded by a low range of hills. If he climbs to a higher point, he hopes to see what lies beyond that range. Patiently he toils up the slope, until he gains the desired outlook, and beyond the low hills he sees a vast and verdant plain, through which a river flows shining in the sun. But still on the utmost verge his view is restricted by sloping downs, which seem to indicate the presence of the sea beyond. If he can climb to the summit, he hopes to see what now he surmises. In patience, then, he toils upward once more, hour after hour, until, standing on the mountain top, he sees all round the mighty expanse. The forest lies beneath, a dark olive patch; the low hills seem hardly distinguishable from the surrounding plain; the great river is a thin silver streak; and, beyond, lie stretches of moorland, valley, and grassy downs, and further still, lies the open sea, like a polished shield, extending far away, until lost on the horizon.

At each point, his hope of what he wished to see became reality; it was no longer hope; for what a man sees is not hope, but knowledge. But hope of wider knowledge spurred him on, and, in patience, he plodded upwards, waiting until the object of his new hope was reached. Then all that he had thought and surmised, all that he had toiled for, was accomplished.

Paul thus represents hope as the instigator to fresh endeavour, the inspirer of new ideals; and, since there is always something still to reach, however much we have accomplished, he would have us regard it as the eternal fount of aspiration in the human soul.

The Greeks have a beautiful myth to explain the fact that hope survives all disappointment and disaster. When all is lost, hope remains. But while hope remains all is *not* lost. There is always possibility, while the soul is sustained by hope. Pandora, the all-gifted, the first of woman-kind, for the Greeks knew not Eve, was presented by all the gods with innumerable presents; and from Zeus, their king, she received a richly-jewelled casket, with which she was to tempt Prometheus, who had unlawfully stolen fire from heaven. In the casket were sealed up all the evils and miseries that can fall to the lot of humanity,—crime and disease, flood and pestilence, falsehood and wrong, tyranny and superstitious fear; while beneath all these lay Hope, crushed and unable to move under the pressure of the others. Prometheus was too wise to accept it, but his brother, Epimetheus, fell into the snare; and, as he opened the box, the multitude of evils rushed forth, and were dispersed all over the world. But before Hope could stretch her bright wings and escape also, he closed the casket, and she remained safe. Thus, said the Greeks, it is, that there are countless evils in the world, ever harassing human beings, their victims, wracking their limbs with pain and their lives with sorrow. But there is always one thing safe in their possession—come what will, they still have Hope. It is the last resource; but it is always a bright and helpful spirit, gifted with wondrous power to alleviate anxiety, and take away the sting of care.

In different language, and under different symbolism, this myth agrees substantially with the feeling of the great

Apostle. Through human life, under all its troubles, anxieties, pains, and sorrows; through human character, with all its imperfections and failures, runs the golden thread of hope. In both spheres, life and character, it is a power for good; given us not by Zeus as the captive solace amid a world of evil, but given to us by our Father in heaven, as one among innumerable blessings, the source of religious aspiration, and the spring of practical endeavour.

Now what is hope? The hymn says:—

Hope is comfort in distress;
 Hope is, in misfortune, bliss;
 Hope, in sorrow, is delight;
 Hope is day in darkest night.

And Schiller sings:—

The world may change from old to new,
 From new to old again;
 Yet hope and heaven, for ever true,
 Within man's heart remain.

The dreams that bless the weary soul,
 The struggles of the strong,
 Are steps towards some happy goal,
 The story of hope's song.

Hope leads the child to plant the flower,
 The man to sow the seed;
 Nor leaves fulfilment to her hour,
 But prompts again to deed.

And ere upon the old man's dust,
 The grass is seen to wave,
 We look through falling tears,—to trust
 Hope's sunshine on the grave.

Yes, hope looks beyond the darkness to the day, beyond the winter to the spring. It knows that though weeping may endure for the night, joy cometh with the morning. Hope has been defined as faith in its prospective attitude.

Yet in some of its aspects it almost eludes definition. Limited within a few cubic inches of brain, it ranges beyond the bounds of space; born in time, it outstrips time; intangible as thought, it is elastic and powerful as thought; without a ray of light itself, it can shed light more intense than the noonday sun upon our lot; without a spark of warmth itself, it can make the heart glow with enthusiasm; without a shadow of substance itself it can give substance to the objects of our desire; without beauty, it can give beauty; without power to raise, it can lift our thoughts to heaven, and carry our prayers on angel-pinions up to the throne of God. What were prayer without hope? Without hope, prayer would be meaningless, impossible. Prayer is the language of the soul that hopes and trusts in God's goodness and fatherly love. Hope in God makes our prayers reasonable, passionate, earnest, filled with a deep sense of the heavenly compassion. 'The hope of the righteous man shall be gladness,' says the writer of *Proverbs*; and the Psalmist sings, 'Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God.'

But hope not only gives reality to our prayers; it also strengthens, nourishes, fortifies all our virtues. If we look confidently for God's approval on our attempts to improve, it cannot but build us up in right resolutions; nor will these resolutions prove fruitless, for good hope is a soil out of which good works also spring. In the same way, hope, rightly founded, namely, in the moral excellence and the perfect goodness of God, is a powerful guard against temptation; it repels the tempter and weakens his power; and, thus, hope in God is a refuge from sin. And is it not a refuge in sorrow? When trouble comes, how wretched would be our lot, if we could not fly to the sheltering wings of hope? Outward affliction and inward despondency are both relieved by hope. 'Why art thou cast down, O my

soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? *Hope thou in God*: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'

But Paul says we are *saved* by hope. It is an incentive to endurance. How many of us, at crises of life which each can remember, would have given up in despair, baffled and discouraged, but for the hope that lingered in our hearts and would not be subdued. How many a man has tided over troublous times, supported by the hope that better times must come! How many a man with hope in his heart has been a support and sustainer of other men in arduous circumstances! The comrades of Ulysses had lost all hope of ever returning home again; and with all hope, had lost all heart. Why should they keep toiling at the oar, against raging waves and adverse winds? Were it not better to be still? Death was preferable to a life of fruitless toil. But he, their leader, still had hope that he should see once more his native land; and he so inspired them with his hope, that they bent once more to their task, and ere long the steady keel was ploughing the calm waters of Ithaca in sight of home. They were saved by the hope that, burning in his heart, kindled in them the flame of fresh enthusiasm in despair.

A mother is plodding wearily homewards, with her child, after a long day's journey. The way is lonely; the night is coming on. The child has begged to be carried;—she is *so* tired! The mother, though her own limbs are almost sinking under her, takes up the little one in her arms, and toils wearily on. Suddenly, in the distance, the candle in the cottage window is seen, far away, shedding its welcome beams through the darkness, shining 'like a good deed in a naughty world,' and she points it out to the sleepy child whose head lies on her shoulder. 'We shall soon be at home,' she says. Then the

sleepy eyes grow wide awake. 'Put me down mother,—I can walk now!' and, taking her mother's hand, she hurries on with quickened pace, all her strength returning with the hope of getting home.

So when the sailor is battling with the winds and the waves, and cannot see, for the blinding spray and mist, the land which lies ahead dim and dark, hope springs up afresh within him, and he grasps the helm with firmer hand as he catches the faint gleam of the lighthouse through the gloom.

Have we not all experienced much the same thing, when, in the midst of difficulties, we could not see our way, and doubt and despair were beginning to exert their evil power, and we were almost ready to give up? Some bright gleam of hope revived our fainting souls once more; or some good friend, with kind and hopeful words, inspired us to pluck up heart again; and taking up the burden of our life once more, we plodded on, until we emerged safe at last.

Yes, we are *saved* by hope! It is not easy to say what would become of us, at times, if God had not put this blessed inspiration of hope into our souls. There is scarcely any hour of life in which endurance is not required; and if hope did not inspire us, we should lose all the fruit of our labour, giving up in faithless despair, just when a little further endurance would crown our toil.

It is right that we should cherish this gift of hope. It is right that we should cultivate a hopeful disposition. A man with hope in his nature will meet the burden of life with more likelihood of success, and with a far better chance of happiness, than one who is prone to despondency. Of course, a man may be too hopeful. His sanguine temperament may induce him to minimise difficulties, or make him indifferent to the dangers that lie in the way. But

for one man that is injured by a superfluity of hopefulness, you will find twenty who are injured by a want of that courage which is born of hope.

Again, a man may hope against hope, and circumstances may prove too strong for his best-founded hopes. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, just before his death, his hopes were high ; but they were not to be realised. He had hoped to crown his work in the capital of the nation, and win converts there, thus securing for his mission a significance and an impulse it could never receive outside. But it was not to be,—at least, not as he expected. His mission did, indeed, receive a significance and an impulse from his visit to Jerusalem, such as nothing else could have given it. But it was through his cruel death, and not through the welcome given to him and his teachings by its people. Yet his hope was not without fulfilment. It was founded in the truth he had to teach ; in the faith that God would not let his word fall fruitless to the ground. It was a well-founded hope, though its fulfilment was otherwise than he expected. God answers the prayers of even the best of His children in ways they cannot anticipate : and though Christ's joyous anticipations were soon turned to the agony of Gethsemane and the darkness on Calvary, yet the hopes of that great heart, that he was doing God's work in seeking and saving the lost, were fulfilled ;—they are being fulfilled to-day. Among the many great lessons we may derive from the story of Christ's life, this is one : that *hopes* securely founded in God are never in vain. They may not result as we expect. But they are fulfilled.

In God, then, let us place our hope. Ever-living and ever-present, He it is to whom we must look in confidence at all times and in all circumstances. In life, in death, we must hope in Him. To Him must we direct our

prayers in hope ; to Him must we turn when perplexed and disappointed by the struggles and burdens of life, in hope ; to Him must we look, in hope, as the shadows gather, to catch the reviving gleams of His merciful and immortal love. We are *saved* by hope in Him. O may we never lose our hope in God ! With hope in God, the future can disclose nothing before which we need shrink in fear. Life is transfigured in the light of hope, and death loses all its terrors. With hope in God, here or hereafter, whatever storms may await us, we shall yet praise Him, who is the health of our countenance, and our God.

HYMN.

I LOOK to Thee in every need,
And never look in vain ;
I feel thy strong and tender love,
And all is well again :
The thought of Thee is mightier far
Than sin and pain and sorrow are.

Discouraged in the work of life,
Disheartened by its load,
Shamed by its failures or its fears,
I sink beside the road ;
But let me only think of Thee,
And then new heart springs up in me.

Thy calmness bends serene above,
My restlessness to still ;
Around me flows thy quickening life,
To nerve my faltering will ;
Thy presence fills my solitude ;
Thy providence turns all to good.

Embosomed deep in thy dear love,
Held in thy law, I stand ;
Thy hand in all things I behold,
And all things in thy hand ;
Thou ledest me by unsought ways,
And turn'st my mourning into praise.

S. Longfellow.

PRAYER.

FATHER in Heaven, our hope, 'our bliss, the light by which we move,' we come to Thee at every hour of life for help, for comfort, for strength of purpose, and for the pardon of our sins. Thou art our only refuge in the storms of life ; and in its days of calm, Thou art our peace and joy. Fill our souls with quiet trust in Thee. We bless Thee for all Thou art to us, all Thou hast been to us in the past. All that we have, all that we are, is thy gift. O that we may live as deserving thy many mercies !

Father, Thou listenest to our prayers for help and guidance, and helpest us to see how thy will may best be done. Hadst Thou not heard thy children's prayers rising

from countless hearts in all ages and in many lands, this happy world which Thou hast given us to dwell in, would ere this have been a moral wilderness,—a desolation of sin. O that we may be faithful to do what in us lies to speed the coming of thy kingdom !

We beseech Thee, Father, still shed upon us thy love and care. Reach forth thy hand full of blessings to all thy children,—to those who neglect Thee, as to those who worship Thee ; to the sinful and indifferent, as to the virtuous, the true, the loving. Shed peace into troubled hearts, joy into sorrowful hearts, hope into hearts cast down in despair.

Bless us all. We all need thy blessing. We cannot live without it. Give light to our souls that we may see through the darkness of our mortality the light of that dawn where sin shall be no more, and the sweet flowers of faith, hope, and love shall bloom in thine eternity. We offer all our prayers in the faith and spirit of Jesus. AMEN.



CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY.

BY REV. S. A. STEINTHAL.

‘Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.’—Colossians iii. 17.

WHEN the Apostles, after the feast of Pentecost following on the crucifixion, preached in Jerusalem the glad tidings of the Kingdom, the vision of a universal religion had, if we can take Peter's first speech as authentic, already dawned on the minds of the believers. He expected the whole world would come to a knowledge of Christ and be blessed by walking in the way that leadeth to life eternal. But their expectation was that all men should first conform to the Jewish Law and adopt its ceremonial institutions. It was only as gradually the loftier Pauline conception of a religion, freed from formalities, made itself predominant, and it became more evident that the Gentiles rather than the Jews would be the upholders of Christianity, that the Church was more and more definitely cut off from Jewish sympathy and Jewish ceremonial bondage. While the Christians were more desirous of purifying Judaism from the later developments of the tradition, these traditions were gradually becoming in Jewish eyes the more important part of their religion, and it was believed that ‘the words of the sages were more excellent than even the wine of the law.’

It was natural that in opposition to this prominence given to the tradition, the Church, in asserting its freedom in Christ Jesus, should become antagonistic to Judaism as then existing, and instead of maintaining itself as a natural development of Israelitish faith, became controversially opposed to it. On both sides the feeling of alienation grew in intensity, and as we always find that those who have most in common in religious controversy are most bitter against each other, we can easily understand that Jews and Christians began to dwell more upon their difference than their agreements, and that too with growing acrimony.

On the other hand, when the Gentiles were brought into the communion of the faithful, they found themselves forced to give up many of their former associations and habits, if they wished to live in consistency with the new faith they had adopted. Paganism, although in its worship of many gods it had lost its hold upon the philosophical and educated classes, who looked on its legends as so many allegories of natural events, was so ceremonially mixed up with the usages of daily life that the commonest courtesies could not be observed or business transacted without acts which implied belief in the old faith and demanded compliance with its rites. Everywhere there were symbols of idol worship, and nothing was more difficult than to avoid outward actions which would be regarded as confessions of belief in the old creeds.

The philosophers in their eclecticism or indifference cared nothing for these things. They were satisfied with the esoteric purity of their faith, and conformed as a matter of expediency to the prejudices of the world, just as many men now-a-days from pure indifference conform to the popular theology, with which they have not the slightest sympathy. But the Christians could not do this.

They felt that they 'must be transformed by the renewing of their mind, no longer conformed to this world,' (doing outward homage to what they believed to be error); but 'by manifesting the truth, trying to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' As long as men were willing to allow other forms of faith to go unchallenged, the heathen were tolerant of differences: the addition of another God to the pantheon was a slight matter, but the inherent impossibility of such tolerance in Christianity raised against the new faith as many enemies as there were believers or persons in any way interested in the maintenance of Paganism. Every Christian, if he failed to make converts of those around him, would always rouse up feelings of irritation at what could not fail to be regarded as exaggerated conscientiousness and fanaticism. We cannot be surprised that the heathens grew embittered against the Christians, any more than we can be surprised that the Jews condemned them. Even at this day the advocates of any new theory of life have to meet like antagonism, and we are not in the habit of showing very great tolerance of those who from what we deem mistaken scruples contravene our social customs.

The Christians could not rest content with passive resistance to the rites which they regarded as rebellion against God and worship of Devils. Seeing the Gentiles around them 'walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling had given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;' they had first themselves 'to put off the old man and to be renewed in the spirit of their mind,' but they could not be satisfied with striving thus to keep themselves pure from sin. The love which

God had manifested in their redemption through Christ, made them eager to save others, and brought them into active opposition to the upholders of the licentious worship amongst whom they lived. Thus whether among the Jews in Babylon and Alexandria, or among the heathens in Corinth or in Rome, the Church was separated from the world, and in a sense different from that felt by the immediate followers of Jesus the world became synonymous with everything that was evil, and destructive to the higher interests of humanity. Men found themselves obliged, if they would really consecrate themselves to Christ and his Gospel, to withdraw from active life, and to seek in isolation that purity of soul and that peace of mind which was sought in vain in the busy haunts of men. Thus the desert places gradually became the abodes of earnest souls, who, disgusted with the sins of the world, and wearied by the constant temptations that met them there, retired to find peace and safety from its strife and turmoil. They were mistaken if they thought they could escape temptation by such retirement; for they took their passions with them to their desert caves, and many a fierce spiritual battle was fought, although the outward provocations to evil were absent. The legend of the temptation of St. Anthony has its foundation in the natural frailty of man. Though seclusion therefore did not make the religious life easy, though physical privation did not free the hermits from spiritual warfare, yet it cannot be denied that the motive which sent them into the wilderness was no ignoble one, and we can understand how their example of self-denial recommended itself to those who saw in the luxurious voluptuousness of the age the deadliest opposition to Christianity. As long as heathenism ruled the world, and no believer in the cross could without compromise of principle enter into public life or join in business without

running the risk of martyrdom, we cannot help feeling sympathy with the hermits and the monks. But when at last Christianity had gained the rulers of mankind as its converts and the Cross became triumphant, it is not so easy to defend those who advocate such seclusion from the world as the type of religious sanctity. Christianity had now nominally become the faith of the world, it was the duty of true believers to make it such in reality. But at the same time the influence of monasticism had become so great that society had learned to regard a life spent in ascetic seclusion as the ideal of purity, and the contrast which had in reality existed between the heathen world and the Christian Church was kept alive now that the world had abjured its paganism and adopted the standard of the Cross. Tradition dwelt reverently on the saintly virtues of the recluses of the past, and mistook the foundation of their claims to respect, fixing on the outward circumstance of seclusion, instead of on the love of purity, which alone gave the retirement value. Men did not recognise that the duty of Christians had changed: there was now no office from which their faith shut them out, and their duty therefore was, if they had truly learned Christ, to go forth and imbue every phase of social life with Christian spirit. The distinction between the Church and the world should have been broken down, and the world ought to have become simply the field on which the work of the Church was to be done. Instead of this the perfect ideal of the Christian life was still made to consist in full abnegation of all earthly interests, and saints were praised the more entirely they separated themselves from the common interest of humanity. We owe much to monasticism: it preserved for us in the dark ages the treasures of classical, nay, of all learning, it maintained artistic cultures, when no other power could have done so, but it also preserved a

false notion of Christian duty, which we have not even yet altogether overcome, and which has checked the religious and social progress of all mankind. To it we owe the separation of action and religion which has given birth to a practical heathenism or, what is not much better, a widespread indifference to religion in every class of society; and on the other hand it has given rise to all kinds of extravagant asceticism, and has kept many of the noblest men and women from practical methods of usefulness in social and public life.

Religion has been prevented from being the vitalizing power of every branch of human activity, and the interests of this life have been treated as if they had no integral connection with the life that is eternal.

If we read the purely devotional works which have characterised the leading Churches of Christendom we see this tendency marked in them till a very late period. From the lofty standpoint of faith and consecration to God, public life, politics, secular business, have all been regarded as so many snares of Satan, temptingly arrayed to lure the souls of men to eternal ruin. He is a saint in the Church of Rome, who, holding a position of influence in the world, as a man of high birth, or great talent and wealth, voluntarily resigns the opportunities of usefulness these gifts afford, and buries himself in a monastery or hermitage; and in a somewhat different mode, but under the influence of the same false conception, some Protestants have condemned all real practical participation in public life, and kept their praise for those who consecrated all their time to prayer meetings and meetings for religious excitement.

What has been the result of all this? Men who were interested in the affairs of this life, to whom the temporal concerns of the world were not of small interest, began to look upon religious men as so many useless drones, as

dreaming enthusiasts with no practical ideas ; and religion herself has had to bear the blame due to the errors of those who misunderstood her teaching. High principle in all so called secular life grew faint. Men thought that they must choose between serving God and attending to human affairs, and as preachers kept insisting that the latter was serving mammon and therefore antagonism to God, they felt themselves obliged to give up all attempts to attain the religious life. Divines from the pulpit kept dwelling on an ideal which was unattainable, a condition withdrawn from all earthly concerns, and the congregations came and listened or stayed away, and gained about equal benefit, whichever they did.

How different is such a state of things from the result which should have followed the real teaching of Jesus and his apostles. In their lessons and their practice, we see no such severance of the religious and the daily life. The doctrine of the Gospels and the Epistles lead to the very reverse. Religion has to be brought home to every man's heart, and is to influence all his life and conversation, to consecrate his every duty, and to fill all things earthly with heavenly aims.

Christ went about teaching mankind to serve God by a life of practical and active charity ; he showed them that no duty was so low, and none so high, but that it came within the inspiration of faith. The apostles tell us that in every position of life we can show forth a Christian spirit, and that every station of life, even the most servile, can be consecrated by being filled in the Spirit of God. A withdrawal from active exertion is not the ideal of St. Paul, but a busy life, which shows forth the Christian graces in the most varied ways.

It is a blessed thing that at the present day a truer view of man's duty is gradually but surely dawning upon

men, and that it is more and more being acknowledged that the separation of the Church from the world must cease. Indeed we are beginning to think of the Church as universal, because it embraces every sphere of human duty and brings into close connection with the influence of the Divine Spirit every desire of the human heart. We are returning to the primitive conception of 'doing whatever we do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'

Experience is gradually teaching us great lessons. We have permitted religious indifference to rule so long that we have found out what bitter results its reign produces. If you build a machine without considering mechanical law, your want of success will not surprise anyone. But spiritual and moral laws are not less sure in their operation than mechanical ones, nay, they are perhaps even more directly the manifestation of our Heavenly Father's will, and yet men have been acting with perfect disregard of these higher laws, and have yet hoped to attain their purposes. Men in public life in most cases really wishing to do good and to govern men so as to secure for them happiness and every possible good thing, have only too often neglected to base their actions on principles of Christian truth and duty. If those in power will treat men without remembering that they are not machines, but each with a soul open to heavenly influences as well as earthly passions, they will not succeed in anything but providing disappointment and disgrace for their reward. At the present day there is all too great a tendency to think that mankind can be organised into religion, virtue, and prosperity, and external pressure it is thought will do everything. It is well to be reminded over and again that it is personal and spiritual influence which can awaken faith in unbelieving souls, can revivify conscience and

awaken a new life of righteousness and energy. Society is made up of units: if the individual men and women who comprise it are religious then is the whole mass religious; but we must look into our own souls before we dare to make general accusations and pass general censure. We must look first into our own individual life and see how far we ourselves are to blame for the dulness of religious life in the world around us. Are we prompted in our actions by a due regard to Christian principle, do we bring all our plans and our desires to the test of the Gospel, and refrain from all things which we feel cannot be justified by the Spirit of Christ? When we arrive at the close of a day's work, can we say that we have done it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and can we without a sense of profanation give thanks unto the Father, that we have been enabled to do what we have done. If our hearts refuse to let us give such thanks, if in our actions we have forgotten the high calling wherewith we are called, then we have been keeping up the antagonism between the world and the Church, which it is our duty to break down: we have been keeping open the chasm between earth and heaven, which it is the Christian's office to bridge over as a member of the royal priesthood, as St. Peter calls us. It matters not what our calling is: religious principle should be our guide in it: all work in which men engage is not sacred at present, but it should be: we are not only responsible for that which we do, but also for what we allow to be done by others without rebuke, if we deem it evil. The Christian must be anxious for the purity of his own soul: without individual consecration unto God everything done is worthless: but we must not be anxious for ourselves alone, and leave our neighbour to run into spiritual danger unwarned. Bound to each other by the love which God has shown to us as His children, bound to each other as members of the

Universal Church of Christ, no one can suffer without all suffering with him. Individual purity raises, while individual sin lowers the general moral tone of the world. Heavy is the responsibility thus resting on each of us, and bitter will be the pain we shall have to bear if we neglect it, but blessed will be the reward of acting in a true and holy spirit of consecrated love. The common duties of life, that might seem drudgery, become infused with beauty, when we find that they have been done even unto Christ. We are not called in the present day to bear our testimony under persecution : perhaps some who fail in their present task would have had courage in the stress of high enthusiasm to have died for the faith : we are called to the difficult task of faithfulness in small things, and have to make those small things worthy of God's acceptance by doing them all in the name of the Lord Jesus. If we can accomplish this, we shall have reason to thank God that He has permitted us to make the things of earth become the means of spiritual growth, and to be His instruments in making this lower world the scene on which the Kingdom of God shows forth its glory.

HYMN.

COME, kingdom of our God,
Sweet reign of light and love !
Shed peace, and hope, and joy abroad,
And wisdom from above.

Over our spirits first
Extend thy healing reign ;
There raise and quench the sacred thirst
That never pains again.

Come, kingdom of our God !
And make the broad earth thine !
Stretch o'er her lands and isles the rod
That flowers with grace divine.

Soon shall all tribes be blest
With fruit from life's glad tree ;
And in its shade like brothers rest,
Sons of one family.

Come, kingdom of our God !
And raise thy glorious throne
In worlds by the undying trod,
Where God shall bless his own.

J. Johns.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, without whose aid we are not able to overcome the temptations of this earth and rise unto the Kingdom of Heaven, pour thy Holy Spirit upon us, and strengthen us so to enter into communion with Thee, that by Thy presence we may receive Thy grace which makes us one with Thee. Teach us to purify our hearts from sinful thought and our lives from sinful deed, that we may be blessed in becoming the fit channels through which the glad tidings of salvation may be poured forth among men. May we find in the changing scenes of our

daily life, ever new opportunities of serving Thee and the brethren, and ever fresh occasions of widening the borders of Thy kingdom among men. O bind us so closely with loving ties to our fellow-men, that sympathy and true Christian brotherhood may reign among us and make the world Thine in spirit, so that all souls may have in their earthly being a true foretaste of the blessedness which shall be given unto all mankind when Thy will is done in earth as it is done in Heaven. With grateful hearts and trustful spirits may we learn of Christ how to serve one another and to show forth Thy glory, and thus help on the day when the angels' song of promise shall be fulfilled, and there shall be 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill among men.' AMEN.



THE PERFECT PRAYER.

BY REV. FRANK WALTERS.

'Thy will be done.'—*Matthew vi. 10.*

IT is the belief of some Eastern Mystics that if, for a single moment, the name of Allah were not spoken, the world would fall into chaos; according to them it is the breath of prayer that condenses into the ordered universe. That is a very fine conception. We are taught by certain philosophers that everything is constituted by thought; that if the informing idea were to be withdrawn, the material symbol would perish; God's thoughts are the essence of created things, and if the Creator were to cease to reveal His mind, nature would fade away like a dream; if God were to cease to speak, the world would cease to be. But that belief of the Eastern Mystics also teaches us that to the divine words there must be the human response; and that response of the finite soul to the infinite Spirit is, in its turn, creative; prayer is constitutive of a spiritual realm which forever surpasses the pomp of material nature. The purpose of God's self-revealing activity is to bring into existence a conscious soul to share His being, to think His thoughts, to speak to Him in prayer; and apart from that communion of the human and divine the world is a failure, the end of creation is unachieved. *Creation, Revelation, Prayer*,—these are three aspects of one transcendent act.

Viewing the matter thus, scientific and utilitarian objections to prayer never touch the sacred function itself. Prayer is not petition, it is communion. There is no argument against prayer which could not also be brought against the fellowship of kindred human souls, that share their feelings and exchange their thoughts. In hallowed fellowship with earthly friends you never think of asking what it gets or what is its use ; such communion is an end in itself, a deepening of joy, an enrichment of love, an enlargement of thought. If we can thus live in the life of our brethren on earth, why should it be thought impossible to share the life of our Father in Heaven ? There may, indeed, be those who cannot realise God's personal presence, and who do not feel the need of prayer ; but that fact can never invalidate the reality of my own personal experience. Though all the world beside myself were deaf, I should still trust the report of my own ears ; though all the world beside myself were blind, I should still believe in the glory and beauty of nature ; and if my own soul realises, as its deepest and most solemn experience, the touch of a divine Spirit, that is evidence enough for me.

Oh, could I tell, ye surely would believe it !
Oh, could I only say what I have seen !
How should I tell, or how can ye receive it,
How, till He bringeth you where I have been ?
Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny ;
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

When our faith in God is a personal experience, prayer is the conscious response of thought and feeling between the divine and human. God is the perfect Friend to whom we can tell everything, and whom we can trust entirely ; earthly friendship is but a feeble symbol of the sublime

fellowship of the soul with the heavenly Father. Do you ask me if He has *answered* my prayer?—it is enough for me that he has *listened* to my cry. Whether my words were wise or foolish, He hears and understands; doubts and fears, rebellious feelings and bitter complaints,—everything should be told to Him whose patience and tenderness are what we most need to calm the tumult and cool the fever of the soul. Do you ask if it is right to pray for the life of your sick child to be spared? I answer, if you feel like that, you should spontaneously express your feeling; be absolutely sincere; whatever form your prayer may take, the essential fact is that you experience the personal contact of the divine Spirit. God will translate your broken cries into the language of purest aspiration; and, whether the angel of life or the angel of death enters your home, he will be the heavenly messenger of benediction and beatitude.

The essence of prayer, then, is Communion; and that implies a common nature, it testifies to a function in whose exercise God and man meet together, and the human and divine are one. That was why Jesus called God Father; that was the best name to emphasise the transcendent relationship. The father does not stand over against the child, he lives in him, he sees himself reproduced in his offspring, while the child's one desire is to be united in loving sympathy to his parent. And our relations to the divine Being are closer than those to any human being; this is the relation of relations; it is this one common origin in God which sanctifies all the bonds of earthly fellowship. In prayer, we confess the Power that sustains the universe to be the same Divinity that inspires the soul; we repeat the affirmation of Jesus, 'I and my Father are one'; in prayer, God becomes incarnate in man and man realises his eternal sonship to God. When you begin to

trouble yourself with arguments as to whether prayer actually influences the will of God or only reacts subjectively upon the will of man, that moment you have fallen away from the supernal grace. In true devotion our will is God's will, and God's will is our will; distinction is annulled, dualism is dissolved.

Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line,
Severing rightly His from Thine,
What is human, what divine.

In the finest prayer I do not know whether God is descending to me, or I am ascending to God; whether God is speaking to me, or I am speaking to Him. At times, the human prayer seems to rise, until it becomes, in its aspiration, the divine answer; just as, in some wonderful music, the wail of sorrow will mount, by slow degrees, until it becomes a strain of triumphant joy. At other times, the voice of God so fills the listening soul, that it deepens into a solemn prayer responding to the heavenly message. Prayer is not so much a word or an act, it is a certain condition of the soul to receive influences from spiritual fountains of power; it is a certain openness and receptivity, whereby every sense and faculty becomes an inlet from the gulf stream of divine life. In such a state of sensitiveness to every touch of the Spirit, we never think of *getting* anything, we are only conscious of *becoming* something, our beings are exalted, our natures are enlarged. In the perfect prayer, there is never one question as to whether we can persuade God to give us anything; God gives Himself to us, and the soul receives, with trembling joy, the unspeakable gift, saying, 'I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my God!' When we can say that, there can be no argument about meaner gifts. We come out of our wayward selves, that we may find our true selves in the changeless God; we do not ask Him to come out to

us, our only desire is to be taken in to Him. Prayer is the echo, within the individual soul, of the universal harmony. When a young musician is enchanted with the glorious music, which rises from some great chorus of instruments and voices, he does not ask for any change to be made to adapt the perfect harmony to his imperfect skill; he does not ask the conductor to alter the score to meet his own deficiencies; no; 'Teach me,' he cries, 'such skill of touch and ear, that I may correct my wilful faults, and become worthy to take a place and part in such an orchestra!' And in that submission of himself to the motive of the composer the student finds his highest freedom and noblest joy. And even so, when we know that the order of the world expresses the motive of a divine Musician, when we feel that our own life can only gain its finest meaning as it becomes a strain in the heavenly harmony, then, not for one moment, would we dictate our personal desires in prayer, but all our petition is this, 'Father, Thy will be done; Thy will be done in me; take me, use me, fashion my life, make me what Thou wilt!'

Suppose that your selfish petitions had been answered; suppose your favourite schemes had all prospered, and every wilful desire had been fulfilled; then how different a thing life would have been with you to-day. And yet, you have a feeling that you would not have it otherwise than it is; your life has been fashioned more wisely than you could have ordered it yourself. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, besought God that her passionate, wayward son might not be permitted to go to the wicked city of Rome; and when, in spite of all, he went, it seemed as though her prayer had been refused. Augustine went to Rome, and there he was converted from his youthful follies to become a great Christian saint. Now,

is not that wonderful! The very things we prayed against, from which we entreated with cries and tears to be delivered, are the very things which, to-day, bring thoughts of thankfulness. The cup of sorrow is pressed upon us; at first, we cry, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!' But, at last, we rise into the true prayer, 'Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.' We drink the bitter cup, we mingle our tears therein; and afterwards, we find it was the cup of salvation, and we thank God that He would not let it pass from us. The human will is perfected, only when it becomes polarised by the divine will; our wills only become 'free' when brought into harmony with the mind of God.

Our wills are ours, we know not how,
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

Prayer dissolves the fate, which seems to crush us, into the love which inspires and sustains us. Fate is literally *fatum*, the spoken word; and the terrible necessity does become translated into God's living speech, of which the perfect prayer is the human echo. Our prayers are the utterances of that Spirit that helps our infirmities, and makes intercession within us with groanings unutterable; in the very act of seeking God we find Him; the movement of devotion is, in itself, the answer to our purest aspiration.

When the objection is raised that the power of prayer can work no change in the economy of the physical world, I answer, that, if it could, I should never dare to pray at all. I have so deeply learnt the wisdom of that economy, that I should seal my lips in silence, if I thought one word of mine could alter by a hair's breadth the stupendous order of nature. Then, it may be asked, what difference does prayer make, if it cannot influence the laws of the universe

for our comfort and convenience? What difference does it make?—why, it *is* a difference! To commune with the Creator and learn his secret purposes is a grander thing than to yield in submission and cringe in subjection. Prayer transfigures servitude into sonship, obedience into fellowship, the terrors of the law into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Does it make no difference to the child, in a well-ordered household, whether or not there is a father whom he can love with filial devotion? The child must not change the laws of the home; no wayward selfish wishes are permitted to disturb the economy of the family; the appointed meals, the hours of study, the seasons of rest and recreation are all arranged most wisely, according to fixed rules. Yet, if this were all, there would be an unsatisfied feeling in the child's nature, he would want something more than these household provisions, he would yearn and long for a father and mother to whom he could pour out his emotions of love and gratitude; and, though not a single law of family life were changed, it would be a wonderful difference for him to feel that he was sheltered under parental care. It is the same with us men and women, who, in relation to the larger issues, are like ignorant, helpless children. It is well to obey these inexorable laws, it is wise to yield allegiance to the impulse of duty, it is excellent to fulfil our appointed vocation; but, in all this, we still have a sense of desolation and orphanhood, until we feel the presence and sympathy of the living God. We must not only find our calling and tread our appointed path; we must also hear the voice of One who calls us to our work, and trust the providence of One who guides us in the everlasting way. The poor sickly plant in the dark cellar cannot change the laws of light and heat; but, by its unconscious prayer, it pushes its long, pale stalk towards

the grating, where just one beam of sunshine pierces into the prison-house. That is the secret of worship,—the soul seeks the central fountain of light and love, from which alone its strength and healing come. The swelling ocean can make no change in the orbit of the moon whose path it follows; and yet that rising and flowing tide purifies the earth, as, each day, it washes every shore. And prayer, though it does not change the providential order, is the tidal swell of the human heart under the attraction of the Infinite. The attractive force of the divine ideal is as much a law of the spiritual realm as gravitation is a law of the physical realm, holding all objects to the solid earth, and swinging the planets in their punctual orbits round the central sun. You say the planet *must* swing round the sun or perish; and there are seasons when we *must* pray, *must* find our centre in God, or we shall surely perish. We cannot control the currents of that Spirit that bloweth whither it listeth; but it is grand to put up our sails to be filled by the celestial breeze, that so we may be wafted to our desired haven.

Who, then, shall dare to say that prayer is wasted breath? It is the breath of God, the inspiration of His Spirit. By it we fall into the line of the divine order; our will becomes identified with the supreme purpose; we are strong for all things; we mount above doubts and difficulties into a serener air, where every cloud fades into the light of God. Sometimes, without any spoken word, there come seasons when we experience an exhilaration, an uplifting, a rapture; for the time, nothing on earth can vex us or disturb our profound repose. There are times of visitation, when God is too close to us even to be ‘near,’ when tides of spiritual power take possession of us; and in the strength of the heavenly manna that such an experience affords, we can go a long journey

through the dreary wilderness. It is out of such experiences that we receive our most vital nourishment. Even our bodies are not fed alone upon the food we eat at our appointed meals. Not only do we need the gross supplies of bread ; our bodies must also be built up by impalpable elements of air and ether, light and electricity. Our lungs, our blood, our nerves, all the pores of our body are continually assimilating into the physical organism the most delicate essences of nature ; at every moment we are feeding on substances so subtile, that they seem to belong to the border-land where spirit precipitates into matter, and matter becomes resolved into spirit. And our souls are fed, not only by reading books and listening to teachers and joining in hymns and offices of worship ; these are, indeed, the sacraments of inward grace ; but sometimes, by a mystic act, the grace comes through interior channels without the intervention of external forms ; we begin to breathe a spiritual atmosphere, which builds up our inmost being by its vivifying energy. God has ten thousand secret ways by which to visit his children ; and upon these finer elements of divine communion our souls are fed and satisfied ; until the whole life becomes a sacred banquet, where the divine Friend says, ‘ Take eat, this is My body, this is My blood.’

If this be the power of prayer in the individual character, who shall calculate the issues of that influx of divine life which forever descends into the world through this ceaseless fellowship of humanity with God !

More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

HYMN.

WHAT is this that stirs within,
 Loving goodness, hating sin,
 Always craving to be blest,
 Finding here below no rest ?

What is it ? and whither, whence,
 This unsleeping, secret sense,
 Longing for its rest and food
 In some hidden, untried good ?

'Tis the soul,—mysterious name ;
 Him it seeks from whom it came :
 While I muse, I feel the fire
 Burning on, and mounting higher.

Onward, upward, to thy throne,
 O Thou Infinite, Unknown !
 Still it presseth, till it see
 Thee in all, and all in Thee.

William Henry Furness.

PRAYER.

ETERNAL God, in Thee we live and move and have our being. All things are born from Thine infinitude, and are sustained by Thy boundless power. Myriads of creatures, that know Thee not, are the sharers of Thy bounty and the partakers of Thy life. Thou openest Thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The beauty of nature is Thine, the glory of the day and the calm grandeur of the night, the changeful splendour of the sea and the mighty strength of the everlasting hills, the teeming fruitfulness of the earth and the

infinite depth of heaven,—all these are Thine,—the revelations of Thine awful power, the symbols of Thine eternal wisdom, the tokens of Thine exhaustless love. But, while with all Thy creatures we share Thy life, above all do we rejoice that we can think Thy thoughts and hold personal communion with Thy mind. We are not only creatures of Thy power, we are children of Thy love. This is life to partake the beauty and blessedness of Thy creation ; but this is *eternal* life to know Thee the only true God. We can do more than bow before Thy changeless laws ; we look up into Thy face, and lo, we behold the vision of Thy Fatherhood ! Pouring Thy life abroad upon the whole world, making all creatures to share Thy goodness, yet to us Thou hast granted the highest privilege of children. We marvel at the manner of love bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Grant that we may live as Thy children ; may our minds reflect Thy truth, our consciences be quickened by Thy spirit, and our hearts glow with the inspiration of Thy love. May the life we live in the flesh be a life of faith in those spiritual realities towards which we for ever strive. May we grow into Thine image, and become conformed unto Thy character. And, at last, of Thine infinite mercy, grant unto us an abundant entrance into the life everlasting.

AMEN.



THE HIGHER AND LOWER SELF.

BY REV. D. WALMSLEY, B.A.

‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.’—Rom. vii. 22, 23.

THERE is not one of us whose heart and spirit are not still the battle-ground of good and evil, not one of us to whom the call to faithfulness does not plainly come, and in whom the counter-claim of self-indulgence does not rise to answer it. We, too, in our best times, delight in the law of God after the inward man, but find that other law in our members warring against the law of our mind. We, too, confess that many times, when we would have done good, evil has been present with us. And we see now the shameful interval between the good that was possible to us by resolute effort, and the evil to which we fell by indolence, or cowardice, or relaxed self-watchfulness. The clash, the conflict, the self-discord, always there,—so that, looking back upon some word or deed the memory of which we would fain blot out even with tears, we wonder how we could ever have ‘so far forgotten ourselves,’ and understand how, in anguish of spirit, Paul could write: ‘Not I, but sin that dwelleth in me;’ and sometimes, when we have stood faithfully to our post of duty, only feeling that there was

our place and there, with God's help, we would stand, we have been humbled in heart and fallen on our knees when the strain was over, and we have thanked God for the victory His grace has given us, and joined in our apostle's cry of triumph: 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Paul has felt indeed how Christward love and zeal will lift a man above himself and carry him beyond himself. He has felt how our evil thoughts and passions seem, at times, not to *rise from us*, but to *come to us*, and to control and enslave us. And yet no religious teacher has more impressively warned us of the momentous nature of the moral choice and of the personal responsibility that attaches to it. Good and evil, higher and lower, making their appeal to the good and evil of our own hearts, the higher and lower self within us.

And we note this same recognition of the higher and lower self in the teachings of Jesus. 'Out of the heart of man evil thoughts proceed;' and it is so that defilement comes into his life. And yet Jesus breaks away from older rules of conduct, and makes the life of duty consist not in obedience to any outward code of laws, but in prompt and loyal acceptance of the fresh inspirations of our own hearts. 'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' He goes back to natural piety, back behind the traditions of men to an earlier and directer commandment of God written on the heart. He sets us the task of climbing towards our own highest and best. Wisely so; for so, he calls us to an unending advance and secures for all time the progressive welfare of the world. The requirements of some formal set of rules we may meet even perfectly; the standard of completeness is then a fixed thing: and if we make that our goal, we may reach it and rest. But the prayerful purpose to be true to our own best, that is to pledge ourselves to a continuous

and unceasing forward march, to undertake what we can never again lay down as a completed task, that we may 'Sleep with the wings of aspiration furled.' For to trust *our own best* involves the thought that we stand ready to go forward to the better thing that only the *attainment* of our present best can unfold to us; and as the wisest of our wise have felt themselves to be but children picking up pebbles on the shore of the great ocean of truth, so the saintliest of our saints have bowed before the Eternal Holiness in deepest humility, and asked for grace of God that they might grow more responsive to the upward calling.

Our faith in ourselves, our faith in our own best, our faith in man, has to fight very hard for life sometimes. There is so much to try it. And yet to believe that 'the hidden man of the heart' has a right to set us our task,—to revere the command so spoken to us as spoken with the divine warrant,—that is to read the thought of Christ and of Paul, and to stand upon humanity's upward track.

When the prodigal in Christ's parable had come down to hunger and direst need, and having lost his self-respect had lost finally even the compassion and forbearance of his friends, his empty life left room for thought to arise within him, and then, the teacher says, 'he came *to himself*.' We are so familiar with this 'best of all the parables,' that the phrase ceases to strike us. And yet, I think, Jesus used it with all fulness of significance. 'He came to himself' That was not the lad's *true* self, then, that had wandered off from the old home, and turned away from filial love and obedience, and was living now among the swine and the husks. I picture him in earlier and happier years, cheery, light-hearted, full of life, everybody's friend; thoughtless, if you will, yet never malicious; passionate, yet quickly sorry for every hasty word or

action; his fitful outbursts, like April showers, never for long together darkening his sunny nature, good far outbalancing evil in his heart, his character, his life. It was from that self that he had turned away, and sunk into shame and caused the great sorrow at home. Then after long wandering he 'came to himself' again, and so he set his face homeward. And there is a sense in which, for all of us, to come to ourselves would mean our life's salvation.

But self has another significance in our general thought and speech: 'self-indulgent,' we say; 'self-asserting,' 'selfish.' And the suggestions and claims of this *lower* self thrust themselves upon us just as our desire is ripening into purpose and cause it to 'lose the name of action.'

How came it that the work of kindly helpfulness in which, you told yourself, you ought to lend a hand,—how came it that you let the time go by, till now the opportunity, the need, too, are over? If you had taken it up then and there, you would have gone through with it; and now, instead of these keen self-reproaches, you would have known the peace of a conscience at rest. But you began to question whether this was not an unreasonable demand upon you; whether it was not somebody else's task rather than yours; whether your friend would do as much for you. And so you called off your sympathy, and you stayed your hand.

What happened again when, in conversation with acquaintances, you made yourself a party to some unfriendliness towards an absent friend? All the time you felt that your slighting words,—or was it your silence, merely, while others talked?—were no fair account of the matter spoken of, and you knew that you were playing but a shabby and pitiful part. Why did you not rise to your full height, and by a quiet word, such as you might easily

have found ready to your tongue, rebuke this 'whispering,' which so often, from Solomon's day to our own, has 'separated chief friends?' But it would have needed a moral effort you were disinclined to make; and you sold your friend's good name for a self-indulgence you despised yourself for seeking.

You are a fair-dealing tradesman; honesty is a settled thing with you; it is your 'best policy,' you say; and more than that, it is the practical expression of a strong principle you hold. But you came face to face, yesterday, with that searching alternative of, on the one side, a down-right sincerity that would mean for you some sure business loss, and, on the other side, a business gain by means of some trick of your trade. And you put it to yourself that this was a common thing enough; if you refused to take advantage of it, your competitor would have no such scruples; it was not fair, perhaps,—it was not right,—it was 'a recognized thing,' however; and you came home at night *less* a man of honour than you had gone forth in the morning.

Mr. Stevenson's little book, his parable of the 'Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,' seems hardly an extravagant account to give of the better and the lower 'self' we bear about with us,—of the moods we pass through, of the characters that come uppermost in us. It is a striking commentary on our text: 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.' Gather up all the good elements of your nature, your love of fair dealing, your reverence for truth and goodness, your compassion for pain and want and sorrow, your loyal love of home and the home friends, your scorn of whatsoever is or maketh a lie,—gather it all together, and let it and it alone build your character and make up your life. What

a contrast to that other 'self,' that should be composed of your moral sluggishness and want of high purpose, your moroseness of temper, your unforgiveness and pride, your uncharity, your selfishness !

But so, like the figures of an old-time weather-gauge, we have our good times and our bad ; our good and evil selves come out by turns ; and life is dark with shadows or is blessed and bright. And we are the battle-ground of forces that will never cease their war till we have done with life for ever.

Could we but learn the wisdom of trusting the good within our own hearts ! Have we not all of us, at some turning-point of our way, under a sense of ill-desert, with the lesson of some saintly example before us, kindled with earnest purpose,—have we not then, amid the silence, answered, 'Lord, what will thou have me to do ?' And turned in heart, we have made our prayer our purpose ; 'to will' has been 'present with us ;' and then, how often, the hour has passed, and our inspiration has faded, and resolve has died down within us, and our life is no better for that visitation of the Holy Spirit.

False to our own best selves, how shall we plead our excuse ? 'We have broken no promise,'—except, indeed, the promise we made to ourselves and to our God. 'No word of ours had raised in any man's mind expectations we have disappointed,' though we hardly dare look steadily at our own face in the glass. 'Are we to be bound by the excited resolve of yesterday, not by the calmer judgment of to-day ? It is ill work, trying to brow-beat and argue down our own conscience. It is no better than the heathenism of old Pharaoh, who, under stress of trouble, promised all good things to his captives, and begged Moses and Aaron to 'entreat the Lord for him,' and who yet, when each successive plague was stayed, again 'hardened

his heart' and drove prophet and priest away with insult. It is like Tennyson's Lancelot, sick and penitent, well again and again unknighly :

' For the good knight in his mid sickness made
Full many a holy vow and strong resolve ;
These, as but born of sickness, could not live,
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often

he went back to evil thoughts and longings, and

' Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.'

The trouble is that we do not realize the obligation to our own best selves,—to that law of God written on our own hearts. So often we are inclined to attach the thought of the sacredness and obligation of the good to some *outward* thing,—some word that we have spoken, some pledge that we have given in its behalf ; and we withdraw the sanctity from the right itself and assign it to some artificial support we have raised about it.

It will help us, be sure, no better than it did the Pharisees of old, shirking the primal duties of life by means of their Corban, and 'making void the commandment of God by their tradition.' It is the *voice within* must speak ; and when it speaks it speaks with divine warrant to command us.

It is one of the striking things in Channing : how the importance of honouring and trusting what is best in the native powers of man seems to lie at the very heart of all his religious belief and teaching,—this sense of the dignity of human nature,—of the worth of souls. Turn our thoughts upon that, and who shall say to what heights we may not climb ? 'I regard all minds,' said Channing, 'as of one family, as kindled from one divine flame ;' and it is so that we are drawn into spiritual affinity and brother-

hood with Christ himself. 'It is not strange,' writes one who, as a youth, came under Channing's influence and learned to honour him, 'that men were impressed by the way in which he even spoke the words, *The Human Soul*; for that phrase, often so thoughtlessly uttered, always brought to him a vision of the possibility of a diviner life; and all his faith and aspiration and hope and joy were in the tones of his voice when the words fell from his lips.'

Here is a thought, then, to put heart in us when we try to work for good and God in the world of need and sorrow and sin: that good never wholly dies out of any of us; that for every man it is 'truth to his own heart his soul shall save;' and as to our own welfare meanwhile, the charity that seeks to 'turn a sinner from the error of his ways' is like mercy, twice blessed,—'It blesseth him that gives and him that takes,' and there is salvation in it for both. 'What must I do to be saved?'—It is in itself a vindication of human nature that the best answer we yet have found is 'Go to work to save somebody else.'

It is the *saving* work of Christ that more than all else has laid hold on the imagination of men down through the Christian centuries, and made him the great chief of faithful souls. And we have heard him speak his parable of the Good Samaritan, and we have accepted the command with which it closes, 'Go and do thou likewise,'—and now we remember that it was uttered first in answer to one who came to the teacher with the question: 'What must I do to have eternal life?' And so, in our own poor way, we find it still.

For faith in man works hand in hand with faith in God, faith in what is best in human hearts, faith to believe that man, humanity, and every man, is better than his history and heir to a glorious inheritance.

HYMN.

GOD scatters love on every side,
 Freely among his children all,
 And always hearts are lying open wide,
 Wherein some grains may fall.

There is no wind but soweth seeds
 Of a more true and open life,
 Which burst, unlooked for, into high-souled deeds
 With wayside beauty rife.

We find within these souls of ours
 Some wild germs of a higher birth,
 Which, in the poet's tropic-heart, bear flowers
 Whose fragrance fills the earth.

Within the hearts of all men lie
 These promises of wider bliss,
 Which blossom into hopes that cannot die,
 In sunny hours like this.

Nor is he far astray who deems
 That every hope which rises and grows broad
 In the world's heart, by ordered impulse streams
 From the great heart of God.

J. R. Lowell.

PRAYER.

O HOLY Spirit, Thou alone canst answer the deep longing
 of our souls, Thou, Lord, in Thy holiness, Thy love,
 Thy helping grace. As we come to Thee in humility and
 reverence, as we confess to Thee our unfaithfulness and
 our need, so speak to our hearts Thy word of pity, of

forgiveness, of blessing; and help us, through all the coming time of our life, to be indeed Thy servants, obedient to Thy will, Thy children, loving Thy fatherly rule. All things that are right and pure and good, upon these may we surely know that Thy blessing will ever rest; and may the confidence be ours that the cause of righteousness and love is Thy cause, and Thou wilt look upon our service of the good, and Thou wilt accept it at our hands.

We bless Thee, Lord, that Thou dost not leave us alone with our task; thou watchest over us; Thy help is near. In our times of special need, in our weakness of purpose, when our faith in goodness is sorely tempted, when our doubts arise, may we have the wisdom to seek Thy help and guidance and follow where thou shalt point the way. Of old Thy promise stands that none that trust in Thee shall be desolate; and we, Lord, in the communion of Thy holy spirit would find our safety and our joy.

Save us, we beseech Thee, from evil deeds and words and thoughts; save us from being controlled by malice, envy, pride, revenge; save us from every shameful purpose; from every aim and longing on which we cannot ask Thy blessing. And make us faithful to the upward calling wherewith Thou hast called us; that all our life may be an offering of grateful service to Thee, the Lord. We pray to Thee in the faith and spirit of Jesus Christ. AMEN.



THE GREAT RECONCILIATION.

BY REV. H. W. PERRIS.

'As though God were intreating by us, we beseech (on behalf of Christ), BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.'*—2 Cor. v. 20.*

THIS has been the great Christian plea all through the centuries. The Church has stood forth as the 'ambassador for Christ,' and urged it upon a world alternately submissive and rebellious. But the ambassador has largely misconceived his commission, abused his authority, and wasted his precious influence over human hearts and lives. It seems to be fully time to confess failure, to yield up a trust which has been too heavy for fallible man, too great even for the elect among doctors and sages and saints.

How imperfect is Speech as an instrument of Thought! There are a few words which have formed the pivots of systematic theology for ages; striking terms, no doubt, and of real moment as parts of a long chain of historical development—but by no means absolute equivalents of divine ideas, to be held sacredly sufficient amid changed conditions of advancing civilization. This term 'reconciliation' is one of them. It is associated with Pagan and Jewish notions and observances, which the world, in its progress toward a more perfect state, has been leaving behind this good while. A deeply-significant term it was, implying an awful gulf between the race and its Ruler,

between the individual soul and its Author ; recalling, too, venerable traditions of a covenant, whereby the divine and human wills were brought artificially into tune, from which state they speedily lapsed into hideous discord : it also spoke of a new and better compact, wherein God and man came to a fresh understanding of their reciprocal obligations. The Christian mercy-seat, assuredly, proved to be an advance upon the ancient ones, 'purging the conscience,' lifting an intolerable load of superstitious fear from the sincere believer's heart, and opening a way of escape from self-inflicted 'works of righteousness' in which mankind found neither honour nor profit. The Levitical system itself had become a burthen and a snare to the children of the prophets ; the pedant and the formalist alone clung to it, so exploiting the unintelligent submissiveness of the common people. How sad a thing is the corruption of a leading caste ! When the fine gold has become dim, when rulers and counsellors have lost the wisdom their foregoers bequeathed, then, indeed, salvation can only come through the 'remnant' who have remained faithful at all cost.

Well, these fervid apostles of a purified faith carefully transferred the new wine to new bottles. They had their disappointments ; the disciples fared as their Master had done. Perhaps Paul came the nearest to repeating the tragedy of the Cross ; how have his aims been obscured, his phrases wrested to false and shallow meanings, and his gospel of freedom from the shackles of dogma and priestcraft transformed into a more subtle despotism, from which the few and not the many escape to breathe 'an ampler ether, a diviner air' !

'Be ye reconciled to God.' Yes, it is still the Churches' message—for the old formal unity is broken, and sects are many—but, can they rise to its wider and loftier demand ? Life is in that word still ; are we reading the newer revela-

tions of its import? All outward things, even in religion, change and pass; 'God and thy Soul stand sure.' To be at peace with God is still to know Him truly, to discern the rectitude of His will and the wisdom of His ways. Were He variable, there could be no rest for the dove-like heart, no content for the ravening intellect. But, now we are grasping a new conception of Him; out of the strong comes forth sweetness. Stern-visaged Science has been leading us to the fountain of Law, and leaving us to find out that Love could make the flowing waters good for food, though often bitter to the taste. All behind us lie the crumbling Pagan shrines, and the faded Hebrew ritual; their archaic language only hints the fuller truth of to-day. Sacrifice, offering, propitiation, testaments—what are they all compared with Righteousness and Love, 'felt in the blood and felt along the heart'?

'Be ye reconciled!'

(1.) It is the Universal Demand of the World upon its denizens, who are 'made subject' to its forces and laws.

The earth is ever renewing its claim for equivalent service; we receive what we give. Out of it comes all life in manifold variety and ordained adaptation; the plant shoots upward, and from its first day to its last has to fit itself to its little bit of soil, to the environing air, to fleeting visitations of sunshine and baptisms of rain and dew. Here are the powers of the Kosmos (as an old Greek would say), what will you make of them? Do you even care to reflect upon their working in all things? Your happiness hangs in many ways upon your knowledge of them; they touch you vitally—it is at your peril that you scorn them. See that trailing hop in the hedgerow; its leaves creep round to the sun, and its stem draws up the water: the flower-cups know their times of opening and closing, and the trees of the garden and forest respond to the sweet

influences which play upon them in the long summer days. Watch the lower creatures, and note their exits and entrances; there is a time for them to woo silence and solitude, a time to rejoice and multiply. The mole and the earthworm have been evolved in darkness, with organs and functions correlated to their place and work. The swallow sojourns with us awhile, and goes south when the autumnal equinox draws nigh. What Power taught the unreflecting bird thus to reconcile himself to the unalterable conditions of his life? A commandment more binding than universal suffrage could make it is obeyed by the fowl of the air, and the fish that move blindly in subterranean waters or roam through the expanse of oceans; even the inanimate elements have their unchangeable habits—the atoms and molecules never swerve from their appointed paths, nor the stars from their courses. Our sun does not forget to rise, and the lightning never misses its mark.

We are set in the magic circle of Law. Our whole being is conditioned by obedience; and happiness cannot be found by any private road. The primitive man soon discovered that his food and clothing and fire were only his when he fulfilled certain conditions; and we who boast our wide empire over Nature do really only conquer her by stooping to learn her ways, by humouring her as the heathen try to humour their gods. The sphere of propitiation is here or nowhere. Prospero cannot govern his island without patient study of the forces that cluster in and around it. The steam-giant devastates life, limb, and property, if we do not learn how to control him; the fire-fiend mutilates our dearest if we cannot say to him, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.' A poor fellow was roasted alive the other day in New York in sight of a horrified crowd; he had laid his hand rashly upon a link in the chain of electric communication, and paid the awful

penalty of being out of harmony with his environment. I lately accompanied a party who curiously surveyed a new installation for illuminating purposes; we stood near the powerful dynamos and accumulators, and all our watches went wrong. But our guide smiled, as he drew from his pocket his own specially insulated one,—he had reconciled it to its place and work. All through space and time the same conditions hold; nothing lives to itself or dies to itself. ‘These are a fragment of His ways,’ exclaims the awe-stricken poet in *Job*; ‘the thunder of His power who can understand?’

What is all our education worth, if it does not co-ordinate the facts of Nature and Human Life? Seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, day and night, toil and rest, are factors of our growth. We did not create them, and we cannot alter them. Abolish the Sabbath,—that is, deprive men and women of a periodical rest from life’s toil and worry,—the offence to God is that you have thwarted a wholesome desire of your flesh, and impoverished your soul. Unduly prolong the hours of physical labour,—you have merely shortened the average of life without enhancing its real wealth. Keep on grinding your axe to a sharper edge, and ignore the weighty matters of family training; master languages, and undervalue the speech of the heart; subdue aboriginal tribes, and cherish a tyrannical temper,—imperfect harmonies of this sort ruin even the work of genius. ‘The little rift within the lute’ becomes wider and wider; the speck of decay in the ripe peach spreads into one entire corruption. The way of ascending life is the only way of safety. Aim at full development, at a balance of forces, at a nature perfectly reconciled with its proper moral surroundings. The ‘Be ye reconciled’ of Paul’s ardent apostolate is one and the same thing with the ‘Be ye perfect’ of the Teacher on the

Mount. The 'secret' of the one is the doctrine of the other. A hundred thousand tongues now blow it round the world.

(2.) Even here and now, Retributive Providence illustrates, on a small scale and on a large one, the penal consequences of an unreconciled state of character and conduct. All the seemingly contradictory elements of our daily life and experience run back to certain springs, and forward to certain eventualities; this because, however we may trace our life-plan, and lay up, as we think in our easy-going way, plenty in our storehouses wherewith to buy off the vigilant foes of our comfort, it is not alone in ourselves, it is not in an unmoral world of second causes only, it is 'in Him we live and move and have our being.' Unless we bring our purposes and methods into accord with His, we only seem to make progress. The concord of our aims with His eternal aim for us is salvation. The sceptre that sways the future must be on our side if we are to conquer. He waits in the shadow behind the visible throne, oftentimes—as says the poet—ay, even the stake and the fagot and the cruel cross may be ushering in the judgment of an age, of a nation, and the triumph of a divine idea that has long slumbered with the bones of its martyrs.

Christianity itself is a witness to the imperative need of a growing harmony between truth and truth, between life outward and inward, between the claims of the individual and the claims of society. When Paul urged these Corinthian converts to 'be reconciled to God,' he was hardly thinking of avowed rebellion; he wanted them to keep going on from their early beliefs and duties to higher things. They were far from being habituated to the life of clear knowledge and steady virtue. Read the Epistle, and see how crude the notions and inconsistent the conduct of

church-members may be. The first step, indeed, logically involves all the rest; and Paul revels in the spiritual masonry which aims at a symmetrical edifice; he projects a reconciled Society—an extended life of Christ, no longer in humiliation but in beauty and strength.

We sigh over the marred ideal; the Church of the early time did not attain the glorious likeness; the Church of the latter day still has to 'forget the things which are behind, and reach on to what is before.' How have they erred? What hindered them, that they wandered so widely, that even now they should be looking hither and thither for a guide?

They fell into the deadly mistake of leaning too heavily on articles of belief, and too lightly on the serviceable consecration of the life. They persevere even yet in so patent a blunder, though the signs are all against them. Belief is not unimportant, if it be realised belief; but parrot-cries have no worth, no vitality, no power to mould the character after an inward law. When preachers cry, 'Be ye reconciled,' and propound stony dogmas, they harden the common heart; when priests travesty the drama of redemption, and hold up the crucifix as a saving talisman, they alienate all but the weak and selfishly anxious. The tokens of true reconciliation are leisure from self-torment, glad obedience, and a lowly love that yearns to bless and save, as its heavenly Friend has ever done. Look out on the startling phenomena of human association in these days; do they not verify the solemn fear that the Churches have missed the deeper and diviner meanings of their loudly-echoed message? The way of reconciliation is still dark to many who think themselves the very elect. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' said their Master and Judge. They fail to draw the people into the higher life; other paths to the goal of happiness are marked out;

Christ's death for mankind no longer symbolises the abandonment of vain ordinances, the breaking down of un-social partitions, the initiation into a life wholly conformed to a divine pattern, the New Jerusalem founded on the ruins of the old. Therefore, since God is our Father, and we will not be filial and brotherly—how can He be other than unreconciled to our unfaithfulness? We may not see salvation until we take up our proper calling. As the Galilean Son was, so are we in the world. Alas! how have his disciples too often abnegated their mediatorial function, letting it pass over to unauthorized helpers of mankind. They are judged even now; the work of God is the rescue of imperilled humanity, and they have largely left that to the worldly Samaritans, while they have been wrangling over altar-cloths and pulpits and the like, or squaring the theological circle. 'Depart from me; I know you not;' 'Ye did it not to my brethren . . . to Me!' Can we pretend that History affords no enlightenment, that it yields no impressive exemplifications of this unreconciled state in whole societies nominally religious? Read your Gibbon, read your Froude, read your Carlyle,—and remember that *you* are helping to make history for readers to come. To-day, as in old Rome and new Paris, Truth walks the streets. Will you not recognise her, until she goes forth breathing some new terror, 'clad in hell-fire'? Open our eyes, thou Lord of the True, and shew us where we are, and whither we are going!

What more can the preacher do, but echo, with trembling voice and an upward look, this divine call, this appeal to all that is best and wisest in our hearts? For, see!

(3.) All Creation works and waits for this Divine Fulfilment; it is the Consummation of the Eternal Purpose,—which is to 'gather in one' all severed lives and hearts,

to manifest the Sons of God in their Father's home. To this all things tend ; to compass this all forces conspire. And, think you, the great plan will never be realised ? Does the Most High delay His coming ? Has our crude science exploded Him ? Can poor philosophy dispense with His presence ? Is the world going to perfect itself by getting rid of God ?

No wiser than their ancient prototype are they who say such things. Cast the thought of God out of your metaphysic, and the confusion of Babel overtakes your speech. Live so as Christ would have you—*i.e.*, 'Be reconciled to God'—and you have found a steady centre for all holy desire and effort. Has a presumptuous dogmatism offended you ? It did him ; but not on that account did he reject the divine counsel. The idea of God is now clear and luminous to the open mind ; it asks no support from superstition, no help from Herod or Pilate,—it shines in its own light, and guides mankind to a mark as sure as the magnetic pole. All these generalisations of physical knowledge, are they not dim counterparts of spiritual laws ? Heredity is an ancient doctrine, Environment a long recognised factor in the soul's and body's growth, Adaptation a principle of morals no prophet ever doubted. What student of nature or life ever failed to gather the conviction that the open secret of being is Correspondence—that united we stand, divided we fall ? The Church was to be a model of association for mutual blessing ; it has failed just so far as it has not harmonised the minds and wills of men,—which is to say that at the eleventh hour, the great Proprietor has to call strange labourers in to do His neglected work. Ah ! if even now we could learn and amend ! 'Leave there thy costly gift before the altar,' Christ is saying to us ; 'first go and be reconciled.'

Yes! we cannot enrich him; and as for 'divine service,' it always was, and always will be, 'love of the brethren.' How shall we know God, if we don't know them? They incarnate the human side of deity; the attributes we can at all comprehend are there or nowhere. Worship infinite Force, or Will, or Wealth—your God is but a vast idol; venerate cruelty enthroned—you serve the devil; love goodness in its lowliest disguise—and you are 'in God, and God in you.' This, and this alone is it to be reconciled; and toward such an end are 'the powers of the world to come' conducting souls and societies. The princes of this world do not often recognise it; when did they? But 'wisdom is justified of her children.'

As life goes on, a ripening experience ought to vindicate the law of progress, and show more and more how the Great Reconciliation is hastening. As science spans dividing gulfs, and bridges oceans, and spreads the language of peace and goodwill, and makes war ever more costly and difficult, so a noble faith in God's humanity and man's divinity is lifting up slaves into freemen, and levelling the cruel barriers which have hindered souls from the sight of each other. The grand order of providence is accomplishing what no school or church or class-organisation can unaided achieve—it is fostering ideals, striking heart-chords, dissolving prejudices, revealing the human face divine in marred countenances in which we have not been wont to find pleasure. Do not, I beseech you, oppose the accomplishment of the Will that conditions ours! He is 'reconciling all things to Himself'—not Jew alone, but also Gentile, male and female, bond and free. O, these miserable schisms in the body; these undervaluings of the eye, ear, and hand! And, these exaltations of party

and pride,—how do they corrode our piety, and mock our devotion! ‘Mint, anise, and cumin,’—poor substitutes for the love of our neighbour, which God accepts as his chief tribute! How do our civic broils weaken us; and our foul purlieus which breed crime and pestilence, instead of the holiness which is health! And the poor are often no better for our music that cleaves the skies; nor are the oppressed brought to light and warmth by our petitions for kings and governors. We have yet much to undo, much to do, before we can look that dear Son of Man in the face, like the penitent disciple, and say, ‘Thou knowest that I love thee, and keep thy commandment.’

‘Be ye reconciled to God’—Ah! if He were not merciful, and full of compassion for sinning, self-punishing man, which of us should see salvation? The miracle of miracles, that overtops law, is the love of the All-pure for evil men:—

‘Kind hearts are here, yet would the tenderest one
Have limits to its mercy,—God has none.
And man’s forgiveness may be true and sweet,
But yet he stoops to give it: more complete
Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet
And pleads with thee to raise it—Only heaven
Means crowned, not vanquished, when it says “Forgiven.”’

O believe it, an hour will come when for each of us, as for the nation to which we belong, the summons ‘Be ye reconciled’ will mean all this and far more; when joy and sorrow, meeting and parting, rest and conflict, grace and law—ay, even life and death, will coalesce in one image of divine intention; when we shall behold truth as an orb, and not as broken gleams. Then we shall take shame for our unreadiness to be won. Why not *now*? All things wait our consent to make us happy in a life of glad service and trust. The

only joy that abides with us is a foretaste of the reconciled life—the holy, blessed, helpful life that the saints made perfect know so well. It is elemental; it cannot see corruption; for it is of the divine essence—‘God is Love.’ *He* is our peace; no less a safeguard would serve. And so, finding rest in Him, whence life in its fulness flows, we await all changes; they must lead where He wills. All roads lead to Him; pain, hard circumstances, disappointments, loss of loved friends, discords sorely trying us now, but melting into harmony at last.

At last! We must believe that the Master’s way is best. He made the instrument,—knows every pipe and stop; when to breathe gently into it, so that no zephyr shall whisper more sweet and low, and when to wake the thunder, and fill the whole space between nadir and zenith, earth and heaven. We groan as the harsh preludes fly forth; we would have the whole consummate art-product at once. He, the Master, knows what he has undertaken. A great poem is not made in a hurry; and we are His poem. We have to learn patience, to go on trusting and filling our part worthily. We are but notes in the great world-music; let us be fully reconciled to the Great Musician’s ways with us.

Browning’s *Abt Vogler* offers a mould for our faith in these times of trial and stress; such heart-science we shall not soon outgrow:—

‘Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name,
Builder and Maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee, who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.’

HYMN.

ALL before us lies the way ;
 Give the past unto the wind :
 All before us is the day ;
 Night and darkness are behind.

Eden, with its angels bold,
 Love, and flowers, and coolest sea,
 Is not ancient story told,
 But a glowing prophecy.

In the spirit's perfect air,
 In the passions deep and kind,
 Innocence from selfish care,
 The true Eden we shall find.

When the soul to sin hath died,
 True and beautiful, and sound,
 Then all earth is sanctified,
 Up springs Paradise around.

Then shall come the Eden-days,
 Guardian watch from seraph eyes,
 Angels on the slanting rays,
 Voices from the opening skies.

From this spirit-land afar
 All disturbing force shall flee ;
 Stir, nor toil, nor hope shall mar
 Its immortal unity.

Eliza T. Clapp.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY One, God and Father of sin-stricken and sorrowful mankind, how can we longer stray from Thy peace and scorn Thy pity? Night and morning Thou unveilest Thy beauty and might before the beholding sons of men; generation by generation Thou weavest the web of moral constraint about them more closely, age after age they mount higher in privilege and advance in power. From out the roar and turmoil of our life, the higher meanings of things begin to shine clearly; O help us to master them, to yield whole-hearted submission to Thy will and wisdom! No more passion-swept and sense-enthralled would we be, but filled with the spirit of glad obedience; until, at last, wholly conquered by Thy love and patience, we too attain the perfect rest of Thy redeemed. AMEN.

ALL THINGS FOR GOOD.

BY REV. C. H. WELLBELOVED.

‘And we know that to them that love God, all things work together for good.’—Romans viii. 28.

IN considering this text, I propose to lay emphasis on the ‘ALL THINGS,’ and to show that there lies the real point and moral of it.

Life has been spoken of under many figures and similes more or less appropriate. It is a battle to be fought ; it is a race to be run ; it is a drama to be enacted :—‘ All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players ;’ but none of these comparisons, is, I think, so true and so richly suggestive as that which likens the world to a vast school-house, in which all of us, men and women, young men and maidens and little children, alike are scholars. No other illustration seems to answer the many questionings that come up from time to time concerning the drift and meaning of this life which God has given us, and which often seems such a hopeless tangle of broken threads and cross purposes ; such a strange mixture of good and evil, advance and retrogression.

Let us take it then that we are here merely at school, everyone of us, learning the alphabet of that divine lore in which by and bye we shall be more fully instructed and

in the end perfected. And some of us have got far enough to be able to put together a few words and sentences of the whole volume, and to spell out a little of its meaning. Now if this be true, if we are but as scholars and learners here—in the literal sense ‘disciples’—at different stages and degrees of knowledge, but none of us very far advanced, then it follows that *growth, progress*, is one of the essential conditions of our being. If your boy at school is not learning, if he is not wiser at the end of the year than he was at the beginning, you say at once there is something wrong about it, and you take him away that he may be sent to another school. Education is the synonym of progress, and it is none the less so in the great school of life. We sometimes say of our children that they have finished their education, meaning by that they have got all the book-knowledge and accomplishments we consider necessary for them. But we have never ‘finished our education’ in the school of life. Not one of us has a right to be satisfied with his present condition on the ground that he is about as good as he need be, and that he has learnt all that the world has to teach him. The New Testament is full of exhortation on this point. Paul strikes the key-note of it when he says, ‘Not that I have already attained, or am already made perfect; this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, I press forward to the things which are before.’ ‘Growing in grace and going on to perfection’ might well be the motto of all Christian men and women. But this is not only Scripture, it is everlasting truth. A divine discontent, which is for ever urging men on to seek some better thing in the future than exists in the present is our salvation, and it is inwrought into the very constitution of things. It is a fundamental law, not merely of human life, but of all existence that if we do not go forward, we

must go back. When growth ceases, decay sets in ; when water ceases to flow, it becomes stagnant and impure ; where there is no motion in the air, corruption begins ; when your heart ceases to pulsate, and your blood to flow along its appointed channels, that means death. It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. It is no less true that nature abhors stagnation. From every quarter comes to us the lesson that *motion, activity, growth*, are essential to healthy life, and it applies equally to every sphere. If the waters of our moral being are allowed to stagnate, they will soon breed corruption and impurity. When aspiration towards truth and goodness fails to stir us ; when we are no longer conscious of an ideal life better than the life we are now living ; when we cease striving after more knowledge, more goodness, more capacity of useful service ; when, in short, from any cause development is arrested ; from that moment we begin to deteriorate. We do not remain stationary ; progress or retrogression is the alternative before us. No man can truly say, 'I am to-day just where I was this time last year.' If he is not better, he is worse. There is, indeed, no more doubt that progress is an essential condition of our mental and moral life, than that the pulsations of the heart are a condition of our physical life.

But here comes in a difficulty. How is this continuous growth to be maintained ? How shall all our faculties be regularly and harmoniously developed, in view of the fact that human nature has no more marked characteristic than its variableness. We do nothing continuously except breathe ; we think intermittently ; we feel intermittently ; we are in one mood to-day, and another mood to-morrow ; we are never for long on the same level of thought and feeling. In our Sunday-praying we may mount up 'as on eagles' wings,' and on Monday be low down among the

things of earth, our ideals and aspirations gone like a dream in the night, and yet without any hypocrisy. Each varying mood is at the time real and sincere. The fact is that the tides of our inner life have their ebbs and flows mostly beyond the control of our own will, and the question arises, when alternations of this kind are of constant occurrence, when reactions and backslidings take place so regularly as almost to amount to a law, what is to be done? How is a steady advance to be maintained through it all? How quicken once again the pulsing of the diviner life within us? How re-kindle the high enthusiasm in God and goodness, which only a little while ago was burning so brightly within us, but is now as a dull and flickering flame. There must be some compensating power, some way provided in the divine economy whereby men shall be enabled to carry forward their spiritual growth and rise permanently higher, notwithstanding the apparent loss by these reactions and alternations. God meant us to grow, and yet he has given us a nature almost incapable of steady, all-round growth.

Some take refuge in a Religion of outward forms and observances, if they cannot always be spiritually minded, they can, at least, comply with these, and so maintain the external semblance of religion. The obvious temptation here is to lapse into formalism and to come in the end to confound these things, which, after all, are only helps to religion, with religion itself. At any rate, experience does not show that this is the solution of our difficulty. Taking all the facts into account; considering the number of churches holding such strangely different and often opposing views; considering that in all of them, and outside of them, there are people of every shade and gradation of goodness, it seems clear that we shall

not find the true answer within the line of a narrow experience. If we assume that one Church or one book or one set of experiences or one species of influence is the sole means of grace and spiritual growth, we may well despair at the slow progress of the Kingdom. But let us go back to the text, and there, I think, is the key to it. 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' It is not that all things are overruled for good; that by divine interposition they are made to minister to the good of religious people, but that for those who love goodness and are earnestly seeking it (which is the same as loving God), all things are working together to help them onward and upward, and were meant to do so. If we are all as learners in the school of life, then our lessons and teachers are many. In other words, can we fail to see that God's grace and mercy flow into the world along a thousand channels, and that he is lifting us up and drawing us to himself through the vast sum total of the 'all things' which work together for good. Let us put aside the notion that God deals with men only through the medium of Churches and the Bible and specially religious acts and observances. He does reach us by these means, it is true, but not by these alone. The operations of the Divine Spirit are not limited to these few things distinctively and technically religious. Who shall say that this great world, with all its varied influences operating upon human life and inciting men to industry, and developing within them the lower virtues upon which is built the structure of civilized life; who shall say that all this sphere of influence is not a teacher of Divine things just as truly as the pulpit is? Has not education (secular education, as it is sometimes called) a great work to do in the uplifting of human life? Have not books, have not newspapers, have not railways and telegraphs,

businesses and industries of every kind, which enlarge the sphere of knowledge, and promote the brotherhood of nations, have these not a divine mission and are they not all working together for good, not merely for material good, but for the advancement of the highest interests of mankind? Then again, do the wonders of science and art go for nothing,—painting, sculpture, music, and all things which minister to refinement and taste, have they not a divinely-appointed mission to humanity?

Again, are we to suppose that God placed us upon this fair earth, surrounded with so many things that awaken our love of what is pure and sweet and beautiful, and that He does not mean to use this sphere of influence in the culture of our higher life? Nay; we may ask, is there anything in all the world, which God does NOT use to lift up human life and carry it forward along its destined path toward the final goal of good. There is no need to depreciate religious observances and Sundays and ministers. We have only to remember that not the Church alone, but all things else are, in their measure, teachers of righteousness; that all the world is divine, God's Holy Temple; that wherever we go, and whatever we are doing, be it Sabbath worship or daily work, the Father's hand is laid upon us, and if He cannot reach us in one way, He will in another. I believe that the Holy Spirit of God is a real presence in our hearts in the hour of earnest prayer, but not then alone when we are consciously seeking it. I believe the divine influence is ever around us, that it comes with the sunshine and perfumes of summer, with the glories of autumn, in the storms and snow-crystals of winter. I believe that the Spirit of God is the breath of life in every living thing, from the leaf which hangs trembling upon the bough to the worshipping spirit before the throne of the Most High. So

God works by Churches and He works in spite of them. He works by ignorant and imperfect men, and He supplements their ignorance and imperfectness by the use of other influences. So then, when men ask despairingly, how shall we become more religious, more spiritual-minded, how come to realise more fully the unseen eternal truths which they accept with their reason but cannot feel in their hearts as they would, I would remind them that God speaks to us in many tongues, and none of them is without signification, and if one voice does not utter the word you need, then listen to some other—keep open heart and mind to all the good that lies around you, in shop and counting-house as well as in the Church. Religion is not a little fenced-off enclosure, within which all is sacred, and outside of which all is secular and profane. There is no such distinction to be drawn. Religion is life, character, conduct; it reaches up to God and down into the smallest details of daily duty; it covers everything. Therefore let your business teach you what the Church cannot. Make your common daily work an instructor in divine things. If in the sanctuary you cannot rise to heights of spiritual fervour, never mind; fill up the measure of your daily life with all that is pure and good and true, and these lowly, temporal things shall be as the first rounds of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. This is clearly the appointed order of development; first, that which is natural; afterward, that which is spiritual. The heights of spiritual attainment can only be safely reached by those who begin low down and mount upward by patient continuance in well-doing; by daily faithfulness in that which is least. But we should never accomplish this were it not ordained of God that all the laws and facts and conditions of human life work together for the good

of these faithful ones. It is quite possible to be very much in earnest, and yet to find in the sanctuary that the words of praise and prayer do somehow fail to strike the right chord within us. Then in such a case, if worship fails to interest you; if the preacher cannot touch your inmost life, I say again, never mind, so long as you give heed to the other voices in which God speaks to you. Learn from the world around you, the world of visible and material things, and then pass on to the higher sphere of the invisible; gather up the lessons of life and nature :

‘Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything.

The problem of life for everyone of us is to make the best and wisest use of this present world and to work out our salvation here and now—for this comprehends all the rest—and they who say that the great matter is to secure salvation after death begin at the wrong end. Whatever we need to be saved from in the unknown hereafter, it is perfectly certain that our first and urgent need is a temporal deliverance from all that is holding us down and keeping us back in this life, for here, if ever, we begin to live the life eternal, which in its consummation means God and Heaven. As all things work together for good, so all things point up to this as the final goal of good, and our present business is to use all these things around us in the way God meant them to be used, as steps unto heaven.

In the olden times, men lived lonely, ascetic lives; they went apart into the desert or hermit cells, so that in solitary contemplation, and in mortifying the flesh they might please God and win heaven.

One saint of high repute spent nearly forty years of his life in a very uncomfortable manner on the top of a

lofty pillar in order to be nearer Heaven. The world is a little older and wiser than in St. Simeon's day, and we seek to please God now in a somewhat different fashion. That was a strange delusion indeed, but there is this in common between ourselves and the old pillar-saints. We, too, believe that self-denial is an essential element of the spiritual life; we, too, believe that Heaven is to be reached by mounting higher, only our pillars are not of literal stone; they are built up of duty and self-sacrifice; they are faith and hope and love, nor do we build our pillars out in the wilderness, but right in the midst of our fellow-men, so that instead of getting away from the world we may stop in it and be ready for the nearest duty, with hand outstretched to help a brother or sister in need. These 'steps unto heaven' are many and toilsome; but the secret of mounting them successfully lies in using to that end all the help God has placed within our reach, *then* we shall find all things working together for our good.

But this view of salvation as something that is concerned first and foremost with the life that now is by no means excludes the life to come. The good, for which all things are steadily working, is an infinite good; it begins here in our feeblest effort towards the right, it can only end in the perfect life of God beyond the present sphere.

He has so ordained it, that in using this life without abusing it, living day by day in sympathy with all that is good and true in the common life of the world around us, and laying our heart freely open to every pure and helpful influence there springs up within us a clear discernment and an inward assurance of things spiritual, which they never attain to who seek it in artificial ways, or by processes of reasoning and logic.

Men cast about anxiously for evidence of a life to come, and find it not, whereas they who do not specially seek it, but are simply doing their best here and now, are the very ones to whom the clearest revelation of the hereafter is vouchsafed. I believe that as men grow into the higher life they come to have times of rare spiritual insight and that these times become more frequent and longer, like the days of the coming summer when the sun rises earlier and earlier and goes down later and later. I believe that as the result of a whole life of faithful service to God and man—a life, it may be, not marked by any special outward religiousness—men do enter into the peace of God which passeth understanding, the peace of that heart, which, having learned to ask nothing for itself, finds now to its surprise, that all things are its own, both life and death, things present and things to come. There is no more convincing assurance of the life to come than the serene old age which follows upon a pure and useful life here. Such is ever the truest life, for it grows and ripens down to the very last, and as that last draws near, there rests upon it a sweet and solemn beauty like that of the closing day. All things have worked together for its good. Life's lesson learnt, life's battle won, there is no peevish discontent with the present, no doubt or fear touching the unknown future, and in the prolongation of such a life even into the depths of eternity, there is no incongruity, but only the continuance under new and higher conditions of the unfolding life of the children of God upon earth.

I believe that many who in their life-time were content to do their duty here without any special thought of the hereafter were nevertheless making the best possible preparation for it, and that the fuller revelation comes to

them as they are able to understand it. Then there is no darkness, but a celestial radiance lighting up the dread passage from the visible to the invisible.

It cannot be doubted that many, who in the midst of life's duties and interests, shrank with something like terror from the very thought of dying, have yet, when the summons came, lost all sense of fear—no shrinking then from the dread mystery.

As we near the great reality, is it not borne in upon us irresistibly that if all things work together for good to them that love God here in this life, it must be so in an infinitely higher degree as we pass into the nearer presence and come to know Him, even as we are known? Yes, it must be so, if it be true that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

In a sense deeper than we can now understand, all things work together for good to them that love God.

HYMN.

LORD, we thank Thee for the pleasure
That our happy lifetime gives,
The inestimable treasure
Of a soul that ever lives ;

Mind that looks before and after,
Yearning for its home above ;
Human tears and human laughter,
And the depth of human love ;

For the thrill, the leap, the gladness
Of our pulses flowing free ;
E'en for every touch of sadness
That may bring us nearer Thee.

Teach us so our days to number,
That we may be early wise :
Dreamy mist or cloud of slumber
Never dull our heavenward eyes.

Hearty be our work and willing,
As to Thee and not to men :
For we know our souls' fulfilling
Is in heaven—not till then.

T. W. Jex Blake.

PRAYER.

O LORD our God, great is thy name and greatly to be praised. Hear Thou the voice of our supplication, and though we pray to Thee in ignorance of what is best for us, yet in thine infinite mercy, grant us the answer we need. Our thought of Thee is all imperfect and unworthy ; we cannot understand Thee the Almighty unto perfection, but we know in part and we seek through present fidelity to attain the clearer vision, the fuller revelation. Meanwhile we would feel that Thou art not a God afar off, but very near to us—the life of our life, and may this thought of thy nearness and thy constant presence be to us an unfailing source of inspiration and strength.

We praise Thee that Thou hast never left thyself without a witness ; that in all the ages, from the beginning until now, there have been seekers after the Eternal, feeling after Thee, if haply they might find Thee. In this upward striving of men, we see the witness of thy presence, and we pray that in these latter days and in these altered times, we may feel that Thou art to us what Thou wast to the children of old, God and Father, Shepherd and Guide. In all our doubts and perplexities bring home to us the sweet assurance that we are very dear to Thee, and that in all the chances and changes of our mortal lot we are in thy safe keeping.

And we praise Thee, the God of all the ages, for thy teaching and leading in the past, through which has come to us such a glorious heritage of truth and knowledge and goodness. We thank Thee for the broader view, the clearer light that is ours to-day, and we pray for help and strength to walk worthy of our calling. We thank Thee for any teaching or experience that may lead us into a deeper reverence for the familiar things around, feeling that all the world is thine, and wherever we are is Holy Ground.

We thank Thee that in the midst of so many things beyond our present understanding we yet know that all things are working together for good,—success and failure, joy and sorrow, laughter and tears, that all things whatsoever are leading up to the final goal of good. We thank Thee for the ministry of art and science, of learning and commerce, and of all that belongs to our common daily life of work and pleasure, thought and feeling. We would read some divine meaning and gather some lesson of good from all that comes to us. We thank Thee for the joy of life, for the bright and happy hours that intermingle with all our dark ones.

We thank Thee for every effort we are able to make that lifts us nearer Thee, for every temptation withstood, every self-denial we are strong enough to practise, and we thank Thee for the example of Jesus, who taught us that in serving the world around us we are serving Thee. As his disciples and in his faith and spirit, we would lift up to Thee the voice of our supplication. AMEN.



THE POSSIBILITIES OF MAN.

BY REV. JOSEPH WOOD.

‘It doth not yet appear what we shall be.’—1 John iii. 2.

WHAT a difference there is between man as we know him to-day and man ten thousand years ago! The progress has been so enormous that he hardly seems the same creature. Is it not possible that the next ten thousand years will witness an advance equally great? No doubt there are persons who think that man as he is can scarcely be improved upon, and that they themselves are the final and perfect flower of creation. Growth they admit in the past, but, they speak and act as if they thought all things would continue in the future much as they are now, and that instead of going forward man's duty henceforth will be to keep up to the level of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, I believe our grandchildren will be as far in front of us as we are of the men of three hundred years ago, and that a thousand years hence our descendants will think with greater astonishment of what we are to-day than we think now of the Vortigerns and Herewards of our national history. It is impossible to set a limit to human progress. Man has within him powers and germs of powers capable, it would seem, of infinite development. The old theory that man was created perfect, full-grown and complete, from which

condition he fell away into ruin will no longer stand the tests of criticism. The idea of man as a fallen being is gone. Man never was perfect; perfection is the end towards which he is travelling. He began not full grown but a germ; he began at the bottom, at zero, and every step since has been a step away from that first rude, ignorant, animal condition, towards larger and finer being. The traditions that point back to an Eden and a Fall, to a golden age of wisdom and happiness, followed by an age of misery and sin, find no facts to rest upon. What men call the 'Fall' was in reality a giant step in human progress. There has been a forward movement from the beginning until now. Why should we think it has come to an end?

Suppose an angel visiting the earth ten thousand years ago had said, 'It doth not yet appear what man shall be,' and had tried to explain to our flint-splitting ancestors the life and condition of their children in the nineteenth century of Christian civilisation, how difficult, how impossible the task would have proved. How could he make creatures understand our life who had no books, no fire, no tools, no dwellings, save caves of the earth and low mud huts, no music, no astronomy, no wheat fields, no domesticated animals, no commerce, no manufactures, none of the arts and appliances which have become to us a second nature? And for my part I believe it would be almost as difficult for such an angel visitor to explain to us what the men of ten thousand years hence will be.

Step by step since time began,
We see the steady gain of man;
For still the new transcends the old
In signs and tokens manifold:
Slaves rise up men; the olive waves
With roots deep-set in battle graves.

Let us consider some of the possibilities of man. Although it doth not yet appear what we shall be, there are hints and indications of the line man will follow from which we gather reason for hope and inspiration for effort. We see from the past that the force underlying the evolution of the world involves the necessity of progress. Nature, like the soul of John Brown, is 'moving on.' In spite of the pessimistic view of life and creation now in the ascendant, the face of the world is forward. True, it is not always easy to find the right track of progress, but when we look at life, not according to the measure of our puny days, but according to the scale and scope of that mighty Being to whom a thousand years are as one day, then we see how the race ever moves upwards. We see it in our own age. Intelligence is increasing. Health is increasing. Love is increasing. And so it is worth our while to 'work together with God' for bringing in a more perfect social state since the forces of the universe are enlisted on that side.

'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.' No, but from the present we may partly forecast the future, and that in various ways.

(1) It seems likely that the future will witness large additions to the physical life and health of the human race. Greater knowledge, improved sanitation, better conditions of work, increasing mastery over disease, vastly augmented medical science, a growing public opinion on marriage by which many cruel enemies such as consumption, lunacy, and other hereditary ills shall be stamped out, better and more abundant food for the people, better homes, the abolition of foul courts and poisonous drains, the free winds of heaven everywhere untainted by death-laden chemicals, all these, with many other forces now at work, promise to give a measure of

health and vitality the human race has never known, adding years to the average length of human life. See what has been achieved already. In little more than a century we have by our very imperfect and tentative efforts increased the average length of man's life by fifteen years. To-day we are talking about a pension-scheme for old age to come into operation when men are sixty-five. Why in Shakespeare's time there were no men of sixty-five. At fifty the average man was old and decrepit. Jacques' seven ages of man only brought him up to forty-nine and left him there, 'sans everything.' Now the man of fifty is in his prime, and how much do you think can be added to human life when men rise to such a large perception of their mutual obligations that the propagation of diseased constitutions will be universally condemned as wicked, and probably prohibited as criminal; when the evils of drinking, of improper and insufficient food for little children, of overcrowding, of wretched poverty, of gross self-indulgence, of vicious pleasures, are one by one reduced to a minimum? Why we do not know what perfect health is. Not one in a thousand has a body devoid of serious weakness, either of eye, or ear, or heart, or other organs. A large part of life is wasted in fighting diseases, some of which, as scarlet fever and whooping cough the foolish ignorance of crowds of mothers believes to be inevitable, while many other ills to which flesh is heir can surely be stamped out. The physical improvement that is going on is bound to continue until a race of men appear on the earth so strong, handsome and long-lived that they will look back upon us with infinite pity.

(2) Leaving the question of man's physical improvement, let us come to that of intellectual growth. It seems difficult to believe that the world will ever know greater

mental power than it has marvelled at in Plato and Aristotle, in Shakespeare and Bacon, in Dante and Browning, in Newton and Herbert Spencer. We are asked, Is it not folly to think there will be any advance on these giants of thought? I believe it is folly not to think it. Improved physical conditions will have their influence on mental development. Full soul-life and full body-life go together. Certainly so far as intellectual power is concerned there is an onward movement from the beginning, and although we may never have new and more excellent Platos and Shakespeares, yet in other ways we may look for a vast enlargement of the human mind.—(a) by opening up new fields of knowledge which shall modify man's life, and (b) by the gradual diffusion of those mental gifts hitherto the exclusive possession of a few exceptional souls. The opening of fresh mines of knowledge by science has and is widening for man the universe, and out of this what new accessions of brain power may come. For science has only begun its work. Yet see how it has enlarged man's outlook. Our conceptions of time and space are revolutionised. We have beheld enough in the birth of the telegraph, telephone and spectroscope to prevent scepticism concerning future discoveries.

Creation is daily becoming a vaster and a more entrancing spectacle, and scientists speak of that which is done as that which will soon appear mere child's play. What new regions are opening to the poet and the philosopher! But still more may we look for intellectual growth, not by the rise of a few giant souls in our midst but by the enlightenment of the multitude, and by raising the average of intelligence. There are many who remind us that in all departments of life the history of the world has been the history of its great men. Yes, and the multitude has been but little esteemed. What were the

masses for but to subserve the gain of the few? But it shall not be so in the days that are coming. The common crowds of men that come and go again, the unthought-of, uncared-for hewers of wood and drawers of water, these are of priceless value, and are to be taught no less than our men of genius, until mental power is the equalised property of the whole human race. The average intelligence of the nineteenth century surpasses far the average of any past age. It doth not yet appear what man shall be, but when education is as free as the air, when the best that has been thought and said is a treasure for every man's possession, then, although we may have no more Miltons and Dantes, the average of intellectual power will be so advanced as greatly to lessen the distance between these royal souls and ourselves.

(3) The same considerations apply to morality and religion. Are we likely in the future to develop a nobler ethics? From one point of view the answer must be in the negative. Who can imagine a finer, larger, more comprehensive moral code than was given two thousand years ago in the Sermon on the Mount? And it does not seem likely that events and ages will so co-operate as ever again to give us a Jesus, with such magnificent forerunners as Isaiah, Buddha, Socrates, and Confucius. Does any man believe that our moral convictions as expressed in the highest lives and best maxims will ever surpass the Golden Rule or the yet more Golden Life of the Great Nazarene? What saints and heroes can we ever hope will rise superior to those of ancient days?

Well, if that be so, we may still look for infinite progress in morality and religion, much as we look for it in intellectual life,—(a) in the widening of the range, and (b) in the raising of the average standard until all men reach the highest now attained by only a few. We may never

have higher conceptions of moral well-doing and well-being than the Golden Rule, but it is clear that we are daily giving that rule broader and deeper interpretations. To love one's neighbour as oneself means far more to-day than it did five hundred years ago. The word 'neighbour' is of more sacred significance. The Golden Rule covers every day a wider and wider range of human life and conduct, stretching out to delicacies of action once never thought of, and condemning us for breaches of neighbourliness that once passed without blame. We have gained a conception of the solidarity of the human race unknown to former ages, and with that conception obligation has taken on a world-wide meaning, and love to our neighbour has assumed an infinitely larger scope. Social relations, international relations, the relations of employers to employed, of capital to labour, of classes to each other, of actions never so diverse, are now slowly but surely being brought within the operation of the Golden Rule. Then, again, with the widening of the range we confidently expect an uplifting of the average—a nearer approach on the part of the multitudes to the exceptional righteousness of the prophets, heroes, and saints. Much has been accomplished. Not in vain have been the 'agonies and energies' of the race in working its way up from clay to spirit. We stand on higher ground to-day than in any past of human history. No such average strength of temperance, justice, kindness, toleration, and human fellowship ever existed before as exists in our own age. And it is certain that the whole drift and tendency of human life points to a development of benevolence and equity, both in social and individual life, such as the world has never seen. There may be never another Christ, but that magnificent dream of our poet may be realised when he speaks of a purified and ennobled humanity as 'The Christ that is to be.' The

whole human race conceived of as one, and filled with the spirit of the Golden Rule, will be a nobler Christ than even he who in far-off Galilee once went about doing good.

Has Humanity, that has achieved so much of goodness, no further steps to take? Is it foolish to think that war, drunkenness, internecine greed and competition, will follow the fate of slavery, gluttony, and judicial torture? We need such a thought to make our hearts stout and our blows ringing. For the Upward-looker, seeing great things, strives after them. It will not do us harm if at present we see greater than we can embrace. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we dream a dream of nobler good, and the very dreaming it makes it easier to take the next step towards its attainment.

We who call ourselves Christians cannot believe anything less. We who believe that the life and growth and development of a hundred centuries of human effort, suffering, and hope at last culminated in Jesus, we cannot believe that his mission will be a thing of the past, until all men become in love and goodness what he was. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be,'—no, but we have a hint, a picture, a prophecy, for as another writer says, 'We see Jesus,'—we see in him what it is possible for us to become. We refuse to take meaner men as specimens of what we should reach up to. If Jesus is unique in the sense that he always hit the mark, whereas we often miss it, yet there is nothing he was and did which is not possible for us. What God was to him, God is to us; what he was to God all men ought to be and can be. If he was exceptional, it was only as the perfect flower of the human race is exceptional among many failures. If we know not what we shall be when we come to our best, let us look at Jesus. At least we see him, and his figure draws us onward. Who can tell what man will be when all the conditions are

gracious, when the long ages with their varied discipline have done their work of refinement, when the ape and the tiger are worked out of our blood, when all events and all training reveal their hidden ministries? Who can tell what accessions of power, what new faculties, what new relations to the external universe, what new capacity for impressing a righteous will and a loving purpose on all things, what new power for discovering in all things their secret messages from God their Maker, the future has in store for us? We see darkly, but at least we see Jesus. Our hopes for the future lie around us as flowers in some sweet garden where we walk in the night, their petals closed and their leaves asleep, but here and there a whiter bloom gleams out, and from an unseen quarter, a faint but delicious odour steals upon us. We can understand but little of the glorious future where man is one with God in light and love, but we can understand Jesus, the white flower gleaming out through the darkness, the fragrance wafted to us in the night, and we know that to be like him will be the crown of all our hopes.

HYMN.

THE God that to the fathers
Revealed his holy will
Has not the world forsaken;
He's with his children still.
Then envy not the twilight
That glimmered on their way
Look up, and see the dawning
That broadens into day.

'Twas but far off in vision,
The fathers' eyes could see
The glory of the kingdom,—
The better time to be.
To-day we see fulfilling
The dreams they dreamt of old ;
While nearer, ever nearer,
Rolls on the age of gold.

With trust in God's free spirit,—
The ever broadening ray
Of truth that shines to guide us
Along our forward way,—
Let us to-day be faithful,
As were the brave of old,
Till we their work completing,
Bring in the age of gold.

Minot J. Savage.

PRAYER.

O GOD, who hast breathed into man a spirit, and endowed him with a great nature, and made all the wealth and wisdom of Heaven to be his inheritance, grant also that he may not fail in upward, heavenward effort, nor be found false to the better part within him. Thou hast set a value on every man : Thou hast a blessing for all. Be Thou in all our being ; as not in the Sundays of our time alone, so not in the chambers of our hearts alone ; that spirit and purpose, life and action, days and deeds may work out the will of Him who made us. Lead us by thy hand ; make us glad by hopes of future glory for

all the days wherein we have been afflicted ; create in us those virtues by which Thou art made known to us—Love, Hope, Mercifulness, Justice, and Patience ; train us for good service ; educate us by all the events of life that we may go on from strength to strength, and from grace to grace, until we realise that holy and beautiful purpose of thine concerning us which Thou hast had from the beginning. Lord, Thou knowest man, and Thou knowest what the days to come have in store for us, both of trial and of blessing. O Hope of the heart, teach us the faith that Thou art leading men along a path of growing light and towards a diviner issue in which the whole story of human pilgrimage shall declare thy goodness. AMEN.

PATIENCE.

BY REV. C. C. COE, F.R.G.S.

Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.—James i. 4.

IT is a great mistake to suppose that a practical view of religion, such as that with which the writer of this Epistle is credited, does not involve a noble ideal. It is inevitable that religion, if it be indeed pure and undefiled, should imply spiritual aspirations of the highest order. And what more noble aspiration could be conceived than that presented by my text? Every earnest soul must glow with ardour at the thought of being able to become perfect and entire, wanting nothing: every joy of life fully appreciated, every faculty fully developed, every work faithfully accomplished, every sorrow patiently endured, every discipline producing its intended purification, every moment duly used and every advantage duly cultivated, so that in no element of character, and in no experience of life, we may be found wanting.

Yet surely such an expectation is but a mockery and a delusion so long as it remains an altogether unrealized dream, and does not become an *effective* aspiration: so long as it is regarded as a picture to be admired rather than a life to be realised.

The secret, according to St. James, is that patience must do its perfect work ere the perfection of human life and character can be achieved.

At first it may strike us with surprise to find that patience has such a potency of good. We are apt to regard it as a passive virtue, good for those who are in a subordinate position; good for those whose bitter complaint is that 'sufferance is the badge of all their tribe'; good for those who are called upon to suffer unavoidable and irremediable sorrows. But is not something more positive, more self-asserting required for vigorous aggression in face of evil, for a complete mastery over the world of circumstance?

Yet, in point of fact, patience is no merely passive virtue. True patience means a determined and persevering effort. We are exhorted, not only to endure with patience, but to run with patience the race which is set before us: the meaning of which is expressed in our modern phrase—staying power, which means anything but the power to stand still and do nothing with unflinching fortitude or unmoved callousness. It is this staying power which wins the great successes and achieves the highest felicities of life.

In the first place, we need patience for the due enjoyment of life. No experience can be esteemed perfect and entire, wanting nothing, which is not illumined with the joy of a glad and grateful heart. But no soul can be really glad and truly grateful to the Giver of all good which has not learned properly to *enjoy* the blessings of life. Of course, in saying this, it is not my purpose to advocate any low and epicurean view of life. We are not to live for the purpose of gratifying our *lower* passions: nor, indeed, with the sole thought of *enjoyment* merely, however refined our tastes may be. Still, on the other hand, there is nothing inconsistent between the performance of duty and the

faithful use of every opportunity of true happiness that may be vouchsafed to us.

One reason why the joys of life are not so valued by us and so useful in our spiritual culture as they might be is because we have not patience enough to enjoy the present, but yield ourselves to the restless spirit which points us to the far-off advantage of some distant future, and leaves us no time fully to enjoy and to turn to highest account the happiness of the present.

‘ Man never is, but always to be blest.
The soul uneasy and confined from home
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.’

The hope that springs eternal in the human breast is far more frequently characterised by its impatient restlessness, rather than by its patient endurance. It is pathetic to think of the possible joys which we thus miss, of the close duties which we thus neglect.

‘ Why thus longing, thus for ever sighing
For the far-off, the unattained and dim ?
While the beautiful all around thee lying
Offers up its low, perpetual hymn.

Wouldst thou listen to its gentle teaching,
All thy restless yearnings it would still :—
Leaf and flower and laden bee are preaching
Thine own sphere, though humble, first to fill.

Poor indeed thou must be, if around thee
Thou no ray of light and joy can throw,
If no silken cord of love hath bound thee
To some little world through weal and woe.’

The restless spirit, never pausing to enjoy the present, always looking forward to an unattained future is constantly ante-dating existence with the result of an unspeakable loss. Childhood looks forward to youth, and youth to early manhood, and early manhood to full maturity and

accomplished success; and then it may be ambition craves that which only lengthened years can bring, oblivious of the fact of what must also be lost with those passing years, forgetful of the disappointment which unsatisfied ambition may impart to old age, or of the mockery of achieving at the last a position which is no sooner attained than death requires us to relinquish it.

And as we look forward with this restless longing, so also we are apt to look back with fond regret upon the half-appreciated joys of the past. We would fain recall the past which seems so fair and beautiful when it is no longer with us! It is the retribution which inevitably avenges our impatient hurrying through life. But it too often fails to teach us the obvious lesson which it ought to convey. We alternate between wistful regret and restless hope, and the joys and duties of the present fail to be appreciated as they ought to be.

The impatience which robs us of the joys of the successive periods of life, in another form robs us of the true happiness of this life taken as a whole. There is a type of religion which is given to use language which seems to imply that the great object of being sent into this world is to get out of it again as speedily as possible. This theory looks with distrust upon all enjoyments of the present, and compensates us for a present restraint with the promise of future gratification. Such a view, if consistently carried out, would prove fatal to the dutiful enjoyment of the present life. For if, with the follower of Mahomet, you look forward to heaven as a place where you may enjoy without stint some bodily gratification, such a sensuous heaven is a strange issue to the noble self-denial of the present; and the hope of it is apt, now and here, to produce a sensual frame of mind, whatever the outward conduct may be. On the other hand, if we look forward

to spiritual pleasures in heaven, but refuse similar pleasures on earth, we show ourselves incapable of the higher life, which consists in a condition of mind, rather than of circumstance. And how are we to enjoy these higher pleasures hereafter and elsewhere if we have not first learned to appreciate them in this present life, being here and now in the presence of God's all-encompassing Spirit, and surrounded on every hand by his wondrous works.

Impatiently awaiting the time when they shall be admitted into a nearer communion and a fuller manifestation, there are many who revel in that future vision till they become blind to the joy of the heaven that lies around them.

In the second place, for the proper performance of our duty, it is necessary to let patience have her perfect work. What hope is there, amid the mere routine of life, for those whose spirits are impatient of the yoke of labour, who cannot persevere so as to complete the task which they have undertaken, who cannot apply themselves with concentrated energy and attention to the business which they have in hand, who are more bent on whiling away the time than on performing their duty.

What hope is there for those who would achieve the higher work of life, if they have not patience to cultivate the art of trained capacity—if they cannot endure the disappointments and discouragements which beset the career of noblest endeavour, if they will not picture to themselves a high ideal and pursue that ideal, resting content with no half-hearted service, no mean and imperfect performance. Those whom we regard as specially gifted geniuses have generally learned this art of faithful service as a necessary condition of their making the best of the faculties with which God has endowed them, and the opportunities which God has opened out before them.

A patient spirit is obviously necessary for the proper endurance of the *sorrows of life*. Even if we look upon these disabilities simply *as difficulties which have to be borne*, it will be seen that patience reduces these sufferings to a minimum. When we are urged on by the goads of destiny, it is hard for us to kick against the pricks—we only increase our sufferings by so doing. When the sorrows of life are in excess of its joys, we only magnify the evil by making the most of our sufferings and overlooking such compensations as generally come with every disability of our lot. Where the sorrow from the nature of the case is chronic, we only tend to lengthen the duration of the infliction by attempting to escape before the hour of our deliverance has arrived.

On the other hand, if we take a higher view of sorrow as designed to afford a discipline for the immortal soul, then we see at once an additional and far higher motive for the exercise of a patient spirit. It is not as though we believed that God was an unrighteous tyrant, like some petty human despot, caring not who suffered so long as his glory was aggrandised or his passion indulged. If we suffered, or thought that we suffered under such a rule as that, we should do well to be impatient of such selfish cruelty. Or if we supposed that blindfold Chance had sway, we might conspire to tear the bandage from her brow or to pluck the reins from her hands.

But if God is the Great Physician of the soul, if there are sorrows which are designed to act as purifying and healing and strengthening medicines, then it must be at once our duty and our advantage to submit ourselves implicitly to a process which has so high an object in view. What should we say of the restless sufferer, falsely called a patient, who tears the bandage from the recent wound, or refuses to take the healing medicine which is

prescribed for his diseased body ? There is a sorrow which quickens us to effort, which purifies us from sin, which couches our eyes so as to remove the cataract of worldly-minded blindness, which gives us again our spiritual sight and strength and health ; but believe me, it produces these effects only on those who have faith to discern the purpose of the Divine providence, and patience to endure the process till it achieves the desired effect.

‘ Let thy gold be cast in the furnace,
Thy red gold, precious and bright,
Do not fear the hungry fire
With its caverns of burning light,
And thy gold shall return more precious,
Free from every spot and stain
For gold must be tried by fire,
As a heart must be tried by pain.

‘ In the cruel fire of Sorrow
Cast thy heart, do not faint or wail.
Let thy hand be firm and steady,
Do not let thy spirit quail,
But *wait* till the trial is over
And take thy heart again.
For as gold is tried by fire,
So a heart must be tried by pain.

‘ I shall know by the gleam and glitter
Of the golden chain you wear,
By your heart’s calm strength in loving
Of the fire they have had to bear.
Beat on true heart for ever,
Shine bright strong golden chain
And bless the cleansing fire
And the furnace of living pain.’

It is not alone in connection with our own personal experiences that this perfect work of patience is needed. We have our Ideal for Society, no less than for our individual experience. We would fain see those who

are near and dear unto us virtuous and happy, excelling in goodness, delivered from the bondage of evil habit: we would fain see the kingdom of heaven realized on earth. Alas! it is no easy thing to cure the besetting frailty or deliver from the bondage of a darling sin. Alas! it is no easy thing to find a cure for the abject poverty which crushes, for the fatal indulgence which emasculates and demoralises, for the vice which enslaves, for the weakness which cannot develop a manly strength. In all such endeavours we must learn to labour and to wait. It is in vain simply to desire the repentance of the individual or the reformation of society, or even to pray for it with an agonized yearning, if we are not also prepared to work for this end also. It is useless for us even to work if we are not ready to labour long and independently of immediate success. The Divine purpose is fulfilled but slowly in many cases, and it requires the highest faith and the greatest courage and a boundless hope to sustain us in our efforts. We must indeed let patience have her perfect work, if by our effort those whom we are able to influence are to be made perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Only by cultivating the patience of which I have spoken, can we bring ourselves into a complete harmony with the Divine Spirit. Nothing can be more alien from the mind of God than the restless, fretful impatience of men. There *can* be no impatience with God—the God of Eternity with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. There can be no impatience with God for the results of his providential rule have been planned from Eternity—and have been gradually developed through æons of our mortal time. There can be no impatience with God, for impatience is a sure sign of finite weakness or folly. Be patient as

God is patient and you shall one day be perfect as God is perfect. 'Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him!' so shall you have peace in your faith, patience in your hope, and at last, joy in your accomplished purpose!

HYMN.

O GOD, in whom we live and move !
Thy love is law, thy law is love ;
Thy present Spirit waits to fill
The soul which comes to do thy will.

Unto thy children's spirits teach
Thy love, beyond the power of speech ;
And make them know with joyful awe,
The encircling presence of thy law.

That law doth give to Truth and Right,
Howe'er despised, a conquering might,
And makes each fondly worshipped lie,
And boasting wrong, to cower and die.

Its patient working doth fulfil
Man's hope, and God's all-perfect will ;
Nor suffers one true word or thought
Or deed of love to come to nought.

Such faith, O God ! our spirits fill,
That we may work in patience still ;
Who works for justice, works with Thee,
Who works in love, thy child shall be.

S. Longfellow.

PRAYER.

OUR Father, who art in heaven, we thankfully acknowledge Thee to be the source of all light and life, the giver of every good and perfect gift. We would celebrate with never-ceasing praise, the ceaseless bounty of thine infinite love ! May the song of our thanksgiving arise as grateful incense to thy throne, and may the sweet melody of a contented and thankful spirit be ever making heavenly music in our hearts. May every gift of thy grace, every beam of sunshine upon our way, every throb of healthy life-blood in our veins, every emotion of joy in our hearts, every experience of success in our undertakings only tend to make us more attached to Thee and more able to perform the duty to which Thou hast called us !

May we own thy providence no less in the more sorrowful experiences of our lives. May we ever place our highest hope and fullest trust in Thee, so that we may patiently endure whatever Thou mayest ordain or allow. May we feel that amid the changing circumstances of life, thy goodness is unceasing. And in as far as it is thy will that we should be happy, grant that we may never mar thy merciful dispensations by a discontented spirit ; inasmuch as it is thy will that we should be purified from the dross of evil and be made perfect and holy in thy sight, grant that we may submissively receive, and patiently endure, the trials which Thou sendest, looking to the end which Thou hast in their infliction. So shall our faith never waver and our thanksgiving never cease. AMEN.

November, 1893.

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